

Meditation Handbook

A Concise History and Instruction

Edited by Mark Maxey

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*I dedicate this book to all those who are on the path seeking true
enlightenment.*

May your path lead you home.

May you truly be free.

Index

	Introduction	page 05
1.	Benefits of Mediation	page 06
2.	History of Meditation	page 09
3.	Religious Elements of Meditation	page 12
4.	Techniques of Meditation	page 30
5.	Positions for Meditation	page 48
6.	Advice on Meditation	page 52
7.	Resources for Meditation	page 55
8.	Hand Mudras	page 56
9.	Why Meditate	page 62
	Biography	page 69
	Resources for Prisoners	page 70

Introduction

In reviewing over seventeen years of reading; instruction; and practice of meditation I edited this book. I cannot take credit for the writing of each section I only edited it together.

It is my hope that you can learn and grow with the instructions provided herein. Having learned from various teachers, paths and workshops in those years, this book is a culmination of those lessons.

I know that when one dedicates themselves to these practices your life changes. Many positive attributes are fruits of this practice. With any practice the roots are embedded in religious traditions. You may even be surprised to see that even in the Judeo Christian tradition meditation has a rich history. For many the roots are the essential foundation upon which Buddhism is based. From there it flowed into Hinduism, Sufism, and other Eastern traditions.

No matter what your faith may be, or the reasons surrounding studying meditation, this book is full of knowledge. It will help you understand the heritage and benefits of sitting in silence.

Chapter One – Benefits of Meditation

(Taken from <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/Spring05/Luft/benefits.htm>
http://www.windlessplace.com/CIMBook_232.htm)

Meditation is more than just an experience. It is part experience and part organic. Organic is a sense that the affects last at least for the a few hours. It is said that we are what we eat. Spiritually and mentally we are what we feel, think and know. In meditation we gradually become what we meditate.

The meditating mind, body, and heart *temporarily* become in meditation what they will *persistently* become—both inside and out of meditation—over time. They will become more flexible, lighter, open to others, and able to have subtle thoughts and perception while also being deeply rooted. The deep rest and subtle changes in biochemistry during meditation condition the body to resist stress and disease and to be more relaxed and fluid during complicated and challenging activity. For example, the study on meditation and cortisol showed only small, insignificant declines in cortisol in short-term meditators, but declines of up to 25% in experienced meditators. The quiet, mental expansion during meditation conditions us to be calmer, more thoughtful, and more inclusive during high mental activity outside of meditation. The heart becomes softer, more open to new experience, and more sensitive to what is happening in the environment.

The following kinds of effects may be noticed right away, and they increasingly show up, or deepen in time. This is also just a sampling of an enormous range of effects that practitioners, teachers, traditions, and now scientists ascribe to the practice of meditation.

Body

Restfulness: relaxed muscles, warmed hands and feet

Energy: better able to move quickly and accurately

Healing: accelerated healing of illness and damaged tissues

Mind

Peacefulness: more settled around important values

Freshness: a restored or new perspective

New ideas: creative solutions and inventions

Heart

Softness: happier to be with others

Openness: more responsive and balanced emotions

Social awareness: clearer perspective about relationships

The following list shows many of meditation's conditioning effects that have appeared in scientific studies done on meditations of various kinds:

Conditioning the Body:

Greater resistance to stress

Less heart disease

Combating cancer

Lowered cholesterol

More youth-related hormone, DHEA

Better able to sleep

Managing chronic pain and migraine

Faster reaction time

Improved blood pressure

Fewer headaches and colds

Fewer psychosomatic disorders

Improved auditory perception

Improved perceptual motor performance

Improved athletic performance

Conditioning the Mind:

Improved intelligence

Improved school grades

Improved learning ability

Improved recall

Better able to pay attention

More skillful use/activation of areas of the brain

Increased independence

Increased creativity

Conditioning the Heart:

More positive mood

Improved moral development

Less nervous

Less aggressive

Less depressed

Less domineering
Less afraid of death
More emotionally stable
Higher self-regard
Improved self-actualization
More empathizing
More spontaneous
Greater capacity for intimate contact

Meditation is a practice that gives balance physically, emotionally and mentally. Today, people are using meditation to treat anxiety, stress, and depression. The “deep rest” meditation gives a person dissolves stress and enables him or her to makes better choices through clear thinking. Those who meditate report higher levels of self-esteem. The practice has also been used to help people quit smoking, conquer drug and alcohol addictions, reduce blood pressure and reduce symptoms of pre-menstrual syndrome and menopause. Meditation aids in lowering heart rate and blood pressure by slowing down breathing, which reduces the amount of oxygen needed. Along with the mind, muscles gently relax. Some experts have compared it to a ‘reset button’ for your body.

Through experiments and tests using practiced meditators, Herbert Benson, M.D., a professor at Harvard Medical School, discovered that meditation counteracts the effects of the sympathetic nervous system – the one that gives humans the desire to fight or flee in any conflict situation. While primitive people needed this response in hunting situations, today it is the reason for many of our everyday stresses. During meditation, blood flow is directed to the parasympathetic nervous system instead. This is the part of the brain that triggers relaxation, a slower pulse and energy conservation – the opposite of the sympathetic nervous system.

Chapter Two – History of Meditation

(taken from: <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/Spring05/Luft/history.htm>
<http://nawrot.psych.ndsu.nodak.edu/Courses/465Projects06/Meditation/history.htm> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Fathers

Some experts speculate that long before written history, early man discovered the effects of meditation by gazing into the flickering flames of a fire. The earliest record of meditation techniques is found in Hindu scriptures written 5,000 years ago. With the advent of Buddha, around 500 B.C., meditation began to spread across the entire Asian continent. Each culture adapted meditation into their own religious and spiritual practices, resulting in wide variations in styles and traditions.

The Sufis of Islam believe that the practice began in that religion at the very inception, with Mohammed. Thousands of years after meditation was widespread in Asia, it became known in the Western world. Meditative practices, in one form or another, appear in almost all of the world's religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Jainism and aboriginal religions.

In the 1960s and '70s, meditation became extremely popular in America. The interest of popular culture icons such as the Beatles spread through the rest of society, especially the young, while scientists began exploring the practice's physical and mental benefits. Meditation became the first widely accepted form of alternative (or holistic) medicine in the West, and is now used routinely to reduce stress and promote healing.

Although there's a paucity of recorded history on meditation, its roots travel back to ancient times. Researchers speculate that primitive hunter-gatherer societies may have discovered meditation and its altered states of consciousness while staring at the flames of their fires. Over thousands of years, meditation evolved into a structured practice. Indian scriptures called "tantras" mentioned meditation techniques 5000 years ago.

Buddha, one of history's major proponents of meditation, and a major meditation icon, first made his mark around 500 B.C. His teachings were spread far and wide across the Asian continent. Separate countries or cultures adopted different forms of the word "meditation," and they each found their own unique way of practicing it. Buddhist- and Hindu-based Eastern-style meditation practices are still the most popular today.



As well, the early Desert Fathers, ascetic monastics that started around 130 A.D. in the deserts outside Jerusalem.

The **Desert Fathers** were hermits, ascetics and Monks who lived mainly in the Scetes desert of Egypt, beginning around the third century. Very few of the Desert Fathers lived in other deserted regions of Egypt. The original desert hermits were Christians fleeing the chaos and persecution of the Roman Empire's Crisis of the Third Century.

Christians were often scapegoats during these times of unrest, and near the end of the century, the Diocletianic Persecution was more severe and systematic. In Egypt, refugee communities formed at the edges of population centers, far enough away to be safe from Imperial scrutiny.

In 313, when Christianity was made legal in Egypt by Diocletian's successor Constantine I, a trickle of individuals, many of them young men, continued to live in these marginal areas. The solitude of these places attracted them because the privations of the desert were a means of learning stoic self-discipline. Such self-discipline was modeled after the examples of Jesus' fasting in the desert and of his cousin John the Baptist (himself a desert hermit). These individuals believed that desert life would teach them to eschew the things of this world and allow them to follow God's call in a more deliberate and individual way.

Thus, during the fourth century, the empty areas around Egyptian cities continued to attract others from the world over, wishing to live in solitude. As the lifestyle developed, these men and women developed a reputation for holiness and wisdom. In its early form, each hermit followed more or less an individual spiritual program, perhaps learning some basic practices from other monks, but

developing them into their own unique (and sometimes highly idiosyncratic) practice. Later monks, notably Anthony the Great, Pachomius and Shenouda the Archimandrite, developed a more regularized approach to desert life, and introduced some aspects of



Coptic icon of Saint Anthony the Great, the father of Eastern monasticism

community living (especially common prayer and meals) that would eventually develop into cenobitic monasticism. Many individuals who spent part of their lives in the Egyptian desert went on to become important figures in the Church and society of the fourth and fifth century, among them Athanasius of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, John Cassian, and Augustine of Hippo. Through the work of these last two, the spirituality of the desert fathers, emphasizing an ascent to God through periods of purgation and illumination that led to unity with the Divine, deeply affected the spirituality of the Western Church and the Eastern Church. For this reason, the writings and spirituality of the desert fathers are still of interest to many people today.

Meditation is a practice that has existed for hundreds of years. Members of religious sects in India and China would use meditation to achieve clarity and focus in their daily lives. In the sixth century, Buddhist practitioners used meditation as a method to seek enlightenment. In this form, it traveled the eastern world as Buddhist monks and missionaries brought their religion and the practice of meditation to new lands. In Japan, the practice was taken to an extreme. Converts to Buddhism began to adapt the religion and created a new variant known as Zen. Zen teaches that the way to enlightenment is through meditation and non-action. This meditation often takes the form of focusing on particular phrases designed to reinforce particular aspects of the Buddhist faith. One of the most famous of these saying or *koans* is if a tree falls in the woods and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound? The meditator is expected to focus on the koan and allow it to lead him or her to new ways of thinking and conceiving the world.

Chapter Three – Religious Elements of Meditation

Many of you may be familiar with the story of the Buddha and how he awoke or received enlightenment.

Gautama Buddha, the historical Buddha, lived between 563 and 483 BC in the area known now as the Indo-Nepalese region. As a **bodhisattva** (a person who has attained prajna, or Enlightenment, but who postpones Nirvana in order to help others to attain Enlightenment: individual Bodhisattvas are the subjects of devotion in certain sects and are often represented in painting and sculpture.), he had passed through thousands of existences before coming to Earth for his ultimate transmigration.

This last lifetime he began as a son of the King of the realm Sakya, Sudhodana, who ruled at Kapilavastu, in Ancient India on the border of present-day Nepal, and was born in a village called Lumbini into the warrior tribe called the Sakyas (from where he derived the title Sakyamuni, meaning "Sage of the Sakyas").

According to ancient tradition, Queen Maya, his mother, first had a dream of a beautiful white elephant coming down into her womb, and this was interpreted as a sign that the Buddha, or a universal emperor, was about to be born. When her time came, Queen Maya went into the garden and gave painless birth to the bodhisattva. He immediately walked, spoke, and was received by Brahma.

Five days after his birth, the young prince received the name of Siddhartha. When his parents took him to the temple, the statues of the gods prostrated themselves before him; great were the rejoicings of the people over the birth of this illustrious prince. Also at this time a devout old man named Asita came down from the Himalayas to meet the newborn prince. An ascetic of high spiritual attainments, Asita was particularly pleased to hear this happy news. Having been a tutor to the King, he visited the palace to see the royal baby. The king, who felt honored by his unexpected visit, carried the child up to him in order to make the child pay him due reverence. To the surprise of all, the child's legs turned and rested on the matted locks of the ascetic.

Instantly, the ascetic rose from his seat and recognizing in the young child the 80 signs that are pledges to a highly religious

vocation, and foreseeing with his supernormal vision the child's future greatness, saluted him with clasped hands. The Royal father did likewise. The great ascetic smiled at first and then was sad. Questioned regarding his mingled feelings, he answered that he smiled because the prince would eventually become a Buddha, an Enlightened One, and he was sad because he would not be able to benefit from the superior wisdom of the Enlightened One owing to his prior death and rebirth in a Formless Plane.

After seven days Queen Maya died, and her sister, whose devotion and love became legendary, took her place as mother.

When the young prince was in his twelfth year, the king called the wise Brahmans in council. They revealed that Siddhartha would devote himself to asceticism if he cast his eyes on age, sickness, or death—and, if he were to meet a hermit.

Wanting his son to be a universal monarch instead, the king surrounded the palace with a triple enclosure and guard and proclaimed that the use of the words death and grief were forbidden. The most beautiful princess in the land, Yasodhara, was found for his bride, and after Siddhartha proved himself in many tournaments calling for strength and prowess, when he was 16, the two were wed.

Siddhartha was kept amused and entertained for some time by this privileged life behind the palace walls until one day his divine vocation awoke in him, and he decided to visit the nearby town. The king called for everything to be swept and decorated, and any ugly or sad sight to be removed. But these precautions were in vain for while Siddhartha was traveling through the streets, an old wrinkled man appeared before him. In astonishment the young prince learned that decrepitude is the fate of those who live life through. Still later he met an incurable invalid and then a funeral procession. Finally heaven placed in his path an ascetic, a beggar, who told Siddhartha that he had left the world to pass beyond suffering and joy, to attain peace at heart.

Confirmed in his meditation, all these experiences awakened in Siddhartha the idea of abandoning his present life and embracing asceticism. He opened his heart to his father and said, "Everything in the world is changing and transitory. Let me go off alone like the religious beggar."

Grief-stricken at the idea of losing his son, the king doubled the guard around the walls and increased the pleasures and distractions

within. And at this point, Yasodhara bore him a son whom he called Rahula (meaning "chain" or "fetter"), a name that indicated Gautama's sense of dissatisfaction with his life of luxury, while the birth of his son evoked in him much tenderness. His apparent sense of dissatisfaction turned to disillusion when he saw three things from the window of his palace, each of which represented different forms human suffering: a decrepit old man, a diseased man, and a corpse. Yet even this could not stop the troubling thoughts in his heart or close his eyes to the realizations of the impermanence of all life, and of the vanity and instability of all objects of desire.

His mind made up, he awoke one night and, casting one last look at his wife and child, mounted his horse Kataka and rode off accompanied by his equerry Chandaka. At the city gates Siddhartha turned over his horse to Chandaka, then he cut off his hair, gave up his sumptuous robes, and entered a hermitage where the Brahmins accepted him as a disciple. Siddhartha had now and forever disappeared. He became the monk Gautama, or as he is still called, Sakyamuni, the ascetic of the Sakyas.

For many years Gautama studied the doctrines until, having felt the need to learn more elsewhere, he traveled and fasted. His two teachers had showed him how to reach very deep states of meditation (**samadhi**) [a state of deep concentration in the object of meditation, a state of being totally aware of the present moment; one-pointedness of mind. the highest stage in meditation, in which a person experiences oneness with the universe.]. This did not, however, lead to a sense of true knowledge or peace, and the practice of deep meditation was abandoned in favor of a life of extreme asceticism that he shared with five companions. But again, after five or six years of self-mortification, Siddhartha felt he had failed to achieve true insight and rejected such practices as dangerous and useless.

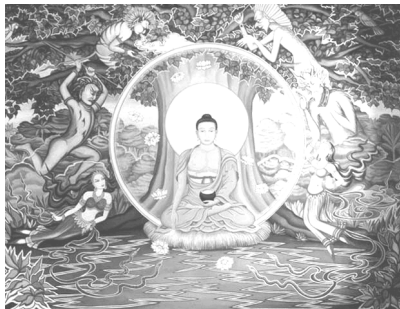
Resolved to continue his quest, Siddhartha made his way to a deer park at Isipatana, near present day Benares. Here he sat beneath a tree meditating on death and rebirth. Discovering that excessive fasts destroy strength, he learned that as he had transcended earthly life, so must he next transcend asceticism. Alone and weak, he sat beneath the sacred Bodhi tree of wisdom, and swore to die before arising without the wisdom he sought.

Mara, the demon, fearful of Gautama's power, sent his three beautiful daughters to distract him. When that failed, Mara sent an army of devils to destroy him. Finally Mara attacked Gautama with a terrible weapon capable of cleaving a mountain. But all this was useless, and the motionless monk sat in meditation.

It was here that Siddhartha attained knowledge of the way things really are; it was through this knowledge that he acquired the title **Buddha** (meaning "awakened one"). This awakening was achieved during a night of meditation, which passed through various stages as the illumination that Gautama had sought slowly welled up in his heart. He knew the exact condition of all beings and the causes of their rebirths. He saw beings live, die and transmigrate. In meditating on human pain, he was enlightened about both its genesis and the means of destroying it.

In this first stage he saw each of his previous existences, and then understood the chain of cause and effect. In the second he surveyed the death and rebirth of all living beings and understood the law that governs the cycle of birth and death. In the third he identified the **Four Noble Truths**: (1) the universality of suffering, (2) the cause of suffering through selfish desire, (3) the solution to suffering and (4) the way to overcome suffering. This final point is called the Noble Eightfold Path, this being eight steps consisting of wisdom (right views, right intention) ethics (right speech, right action, right livelihood), mental discipline (right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration), which ultimately lead to liberation from the source of suffering.

When
had attained
and had
The rays
body shone
space. He
for seven
for four more



day came, Gautama
perfect illumination,
become a Buddha.
emanating from his
to the boundaries of
stayed in meditation
more days, and then
weeks he stayed by

the tree. Through his process of enlightenment he discovered that all sentient beings in this universal life possess buddhahood, and all are future potential buddhas.

That is the story of the Buddha, but let's look at the meditation within the Christian church.

Christian Meditation: Is it Christian to Meditate?

Christian meditation is rooted in the Bible. In fact, the Bible commands us to meditate. In Joshua 1:8, God says to meditate on His word day and night so we will obey it. The psalmist says, "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Actually, the Bible mentions meditate or meditation 20 times.

In the Old Testament there are two primary Hebrew words for meditation: *Haga*, which means to utter, groan, meditate, or ponder; and *Sihach*, which means to muse, rehearse in one's mind, or contemplate. These words can also be translated as dwell, diligently consider, and heed.

Christian Meditation: A History

One form of Christian meditation that has been used by believers since at least the fourth century AD is the *lectio divina*. It has been traditionally used in monastic religious orders and is enjoying resurgence today. *Lectio divina* means "sacred reading" and has four stages: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (discursive meditation), *oratio* (affective prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation). In the *lectio* (reading) stage, one finds a passage and reads it deliberately. The next stage, *meditatio* (discursive meditation), is where one ponders the text. In the *oratio* (affective prayer) stage, one talks to God about the reading, asking Him to reveal the truth. In the final, *contemplatio* (contemplation) stage, one simply rests in the Lord's presence.

Today, meditation is generally seen as a practice of the New Age movement. This comes primarily from its association with Transcendental Meditation. Transcendental Meditation (TM) was developed by the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi of the Hindu religion and is steeped in Hindu philosophy. The "yogi" in the TM founder's name indicates his status in Hinduism. Courts in the US have ruled that TM is not a secular discipline; it is Hindu religion (US District Court, Newark, NJ, on October 29, 1977 and the US Court of Appeals, Philadelphia, PA February 2, 1979).

Christian Meditation: What do Christian Leaders Say?

One important thing the Bible tells us to do is to think about God's Word. Our thoughts determine our behavior and so what we think about is very important. That is why God wants us to think about His Word, or meditate on it. Jim Downing in *Meditation* (NavPress) says God considers meditation a "vital exercise of the minds of His children."

In *Satisfy Your Soul* (NavPress), Dr. Bruce Demarest writes, "A quieted heart is our best preparation for all this work of God ... Meditation refocuses us from ourselves and from the world so that we reflect on God's Word, His nature, His abilities, and His works ... So we prayerfully ponder, muse, and 'chew' the words of Scripture. ... The goal is simply to permit the Holy Spirit to activate the life-giving Word of God" (133).

Christian Meditation

Christian Meditation is meditation in a Christian context. The word meditation has come to have two different meanings: (1) continued, intent, focused thought; and (2) a state of quiet, intentionally unfocused, "contentless" awareness. This double meaning has contributed to misunderstanding and disagreement about the nature, role, and even the appropriateness of Christian meditation. Traditionally, the word meditation (*meditatio*) had the first meaning, and another word; contemplation (*contemplatio*) was used for the second.

Scriptural Basis

Christian meditation is often associated with prayer or scripture study. It is rooted in the Bible, which directs its readers to meditate. In Joshua 1:8, God commands his people to meditate on his word day and night to instill obedience and enhance relationship and fellowship. **This brings us in close touch with God's reality, power, grace, faith and miracles.** The psalmist says that "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night" (Psalm 1:2). The Bible mentions *meditate* or *meditation* twenty times.

In the Old Testament, there are two Hebrew words for meditation: *hāgâ* (Hebrew: הָגָה), which means *to sigh* or *murmur*, but also *to meditate*, and *sîâ* (Hebrew: שִׁיחָה), which means *to muse*, or *rehearse in one's mind*.

LECTO DIVINA

Formal Christian meditation began with the early Christian monastic practice of reading the Bible slowly. Monks would carefully consider the deeper meaning of each verse as they read it. This slow and thoughtful reading of Scripture, and the ensuing pondering of its meaning, was their meditation. This spiritual practice is called "divine reading" or "sacred reading", or *lectio divina*.

Sometimes the monks found themselves spontaneously praying as a result of their meditation on Scripture, and their prayer would in turn lead on to a simple, loving focus on God. This wordless love for God they called contemplation.

Guigo II, a Carthusian monk and prior of Grande Chartreuse first formally described the progression from Bible reading, to meditation, to prayer, to loving regard for God, in the 12th century. Guigo named the four steps of this "ladder" of prayer with the Latin terms *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*.

The Cloud of Unknowing (14th century)

The Cloud of Unknowing, an anonymous treatise written in England in the 14th century, is a concise and practical primer on contemplative prayer. The author's premise is that, to experience God, one must strive for a "darkness about your mind, or as it were, a cloud of unknowing." To do this, one must fix one's heart on God, forgetting all else.

St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556)

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola contain numerous meditative exercises. For example, the practitioner is encouraged to visualize and meditate upon scenes from the life of Christ. His *Contemplation to Attain Love* (of God), is, in a sense, a method that combines intellectual meditation and more affective (emotional) contemplation.

St. Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

St. Teresa of Avila practiced contemplative prayer for periods of one hour at a time, twice a day. In her *Life* she recounts that she found this very difficult for the first several years. She had no one to teach her, and taught herself from the instructions given in a book, *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* by Francisco de Osuna. Her starting point was the practice of "recollection". Recollection means an effort of the

will to keep the senses and the intellect in check and not allow them to stray. One restricts the attention to a single subject, principally the love of God. "It is called recollection because the soul collects together all the faculties and enters within itself to be with God", she says in *The way of perfection*. Because St Teresa found it difficult to concentrate, she would use devices such as short readings from an inspiring book, a scene of natural beauty or a religious statue or picture to remind her of her intended focus. In due course, the mind becomes effortlessly still. The initial practice St Teresa viewed as the voluntary effort of the individual, while the subsequent stillness and joy she saw as gifts from God. Her best-known book on meditation and prayer is *The Interior Castle*.

Madame Guyon (1648–1717)

Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon (1648-1717) was a French mystic and writer. As a 19-year-old, she was greatly influenced by an encounter with a Franciscan priest who had just emerged from a five-year retreat. She asked him why she was having such difficulties with prayer, and he replied: "It is, Madame, because you seek without what you have within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart, and there you will find Him". In her mid-thirties, Madame Guyon wrote her *Moyen court et très facile de faire oraison*, which in English is titled *A short and very easy method of prayer*. (Note that the book *Experiencing the depths of Jesus Christ*, which poses as a translation, is in fact an interpretive revision.) The mysticism of Madame Guyon is generally considered a form of quietism, which is very strongly discouraged, even to the point of being considered heresy, by the Roman Catholic Church.

The 20th Century

Two contemporary forms of Christian meditation emerged during the twentieth century.

Fr. John Main, O.S.B. (1926–1982) was a Benedictine monk and priest who presented a way of Christian meditation that utilizes the practice of a prayer-phrase or mantra. In his method, one recites a prayer-phrase as a means of placing everything aside. In this way, instead of talking to God, one is just being with God, allowing God's presence to fill his heart, thus transforming his inner being. Fr. Main's teachings drew on parallels he saw between the spiritual practice taught by Desert Father John Cassian and the meditative practice he

had been taught by the Swami Satyananda in Kuala Lumpur. His work is continued by Fr. Laurence Freeman, O.S.B.

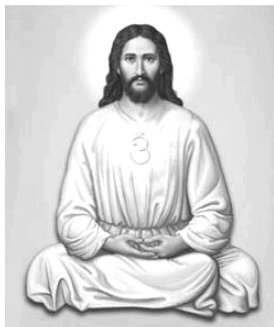
Fr. William Meninger, O.C.S.O., Fr. Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O., and Fr. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O., were the leading proponents of the Centering Prayer method. Here a sacred word is used to express only the intention to be in God's presence, placing everything else aside. As with Fr. Main's method, the goal is for one to just be with God, allowing God's presence and action to fill his inner being.

The forms of prayer described above are part of the apophatic tradition and are quite distinct from, for example, the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Richard J. Foster, an Evangelical Quaker, supports Christian meditation or contemplative prayer in Chapter 2 of his work *Celebration of Discipline*.

Theology of Christian Meditation

In Hinduism, meditation as a component of Yoga is one path to attain enlightenment, union with (or company of) God. Christians agree that meditation is an effective technique to quiet and clear the mind, as preparation for God's inspiration. But meditation is not an alternative to Christ as a means to salvation or theosis [In Christianity theology, particularly in Eastern Orthodoxy, Oriental Orthodoxy and Eastern Catholic theology, **theosis** (written also: **theiosis**, **theopoiesis**, **theōsis**; Greek: εἰσθεῖς, meaning *divinization*, or *deification*, or *making divine*) is the process of a believer in emulating the life example of Jesus Christ and of following the gospel of Christ in one's daily life; the process of seeking to become more holy], but only a method of spiritual discipline like prayer and fasting. For Christians, meditation can be considered a form of worship, centered in love.



Orthodox Forms of Meditation

The **Jesus Prayer**, also called the **Prayer of the Heart**, is a short, formulaic prayer often uttered repeatedly. It has been widely used, taught and discussed throughout the history of the Eastern Churches. The exact words of the prayer have varied from the simplest possible involving Jesus' name to the more common extended form: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

The Jesus Prayer is for the Eastern Orthodox one of the most profound and mystical prayers and it is often repeated continually as a part of personal ascetic practice. Its practice is an integral part of the eremitic tradition of prayer known as Hesychasm (Greek: *συχάζω*, *hesychazo*, "to keep stillness"), the subject of the *Philokalia* (Greek: *φιλοκαλεῖν*, "love of beauty"), a collection of 4th to 15th century texts on prayer, compiled in the late 18th century by St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite and St. Makarios of Corinth. The monastic state of Mount Athos is a center of the practice of the Jesus Prayer.

Origins

The prayer's origin is most likely the Egyptian desert, which was settled by the monastic Desert Fathers in the fifth century. (Antoine Guillaumont reports the finding of an inscription containing the Jesus Prayer in the ruins of a cell in the Egyptian desert dated roughly to the period being discussed - Antoine Guillaumont, *Une inscription copte sur la prière de Jesus in Aux origines du monachisme chrétien, Pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, pp. 168–83. In *Spiritualité orientale et vie monastique*, No 30. Bégrolles en Mauges (Maine & Loire), France: Abbaye de Bellefontaine.)

The practice of repeating the prayer continually dates back to at least the fifth century. The earliest known mention is in *On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination* of St. Diadochos of Photiki (400-ca.486), a work found in the first volume of the *Philokalia*. The Jesus Prayer is described in Diadochos's work in terms very similar to St. John Cassian's (ca.360-435) description in the *Conferences* 9 and 10 of the repetitive use of a passage of the Psalms. St. Diadochos ties the practice of the Jesus Prayer to the purification of the soul and teaches that repetition of the prayer produces inner peace.

The use of the Jesus Prayer is recommended in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* of St. John Climacus (ca.523–606) and in the work of St. Hesychios the Priest (ca. 8th century), *Pros Theodoulon*, found in

the first volume of the *Philokalia*. The use of the Jesus Prayer according to the tradition of the *Philokalia* is the subject of the 19th century anonymous Russian spiritual classic *The Way of a Pilgrim*.

Though the Jesus Prayer has been practiced through the centuries as part of the Eastern tradition, in the 20th century it also began to be used in some Western churches, including some Roman Catholic and Anglican churches.

Hesychasm (Greek συχασμός *hesychasmos*, from συχία *hesychia*, "stillness, rest, quiet, silence")¹ is an eremitic tradition of prayer in the Eastern Orthodox Church, and some other Eastern Churches of the Byzantine Rite, practised (Gk: συχάζω *hesychazo*: "to keep stillness") by the **Hesychast** (Gr. συχαστής *hesychastes*).

Based on Christ's injunction in the Gospel of Matthew to "go into your closet to pray"², Hesychasm in tradition has been the process of retiring inward by ceasing to register the senses, in order to achieve an experiential knowledge of God

The origin of the term *hesychasmos*, and of the related terms *hesychastes*, *hesychia* and *hesychazo*, is not entirely certain. According to the entries in Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, the basic terms *hesychia* and *hesychazo* appear as early as the 4th Century in such Fathers as St John Chrysostom and the Cappadocians. The terms also appear in the same period in Evagrius Pontikos (c.345–399), who although he is writing in Egypt is out of the circle of the Cappadocians, and in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

The term *Hesychast* is used sparingly in Christian ascetical writings emanating from Egypt from the 4th Century on, although the writings of Evagrius and the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* do attest to it. In Egypt, the terms more often used are *anchoretism* (Gr. ναχώρησις, "withdrawal, retreat"), and *anchorite* (Gr. ναχωρητής, "one who withdraws or retreats, i.e. a hermit").

The term *Hesychast* was used in the 6th Century in Palestine in the *Lives* of Cyril of Scythopolis, many of which lives treat of Hesychasts who were contemporaries of Cyril. Here, it should be noted that several of the saints about whom Cyril was writing, especially Euthymios and Savas, were in fact from Cappadocia.

The laws (*novella*) of the Emperor Justinian (6th Century) treat *Hesychast* and *anchorite* as synonyms, making them interchangeable terms.

The terms *hesychia* and *Hesychast* are used quite systematically in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* of St John of Sinai (523–603) and in *Pros Theodoulon* by St Hesychios (c.750?), who is ordinarily also considered to be of the School of Sinai. It is not known where either St John of Sinai or St Hesychios were born, nor where they received their monastic formation.

It appears that the particularity of the term *Hesychast* has to do with the integration of the continual repetition of the Jesus Prayer into the practices of mental ascesis already used by hermits in Egypt.

Hesychastic Practice

Hesychastic practice bears some formal resemblance to mystical prayer or meditation in Eastern religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Sufism, compare with yoga), although this similarity is often over-emphasized in popular accounts and rejected by actual Orthodox practitioners of Hesychasm.^{[3][4]} The practice may involve specific body postures and be accompanied by very deliberate breathing patterns. However, these bodily postures and breathing patterns are treated as secondary both by modern Athonite practitioners of Hesychasm (e.g. *Elder Ephraim of Katounakia*, p. 114 [Greek edition]) and by the more ancient texts in the *Philokalia* (e.g. *On the Two Methods of Prayer* by St Gregory of Sinai), the emphasis being on the primary role of the uncreated Energies of God.

Hesychast are fully integrated into the Liturgical and sacramental life of the Orthodox Church, including the daily cycle of liturgical prayer of the Divine Office and the Divine Liturgy. However, Hesychast who are living as hermits might have a very rare attendance at the Divine Liturgy (see the life of Saint Seraphim of Sarov) and might not recite the Divine Office except by means of the Jesus Prayer (attested practice on Mt Athos). In general, the Hesychast restricts his external activities for the sake of his Hesychastic practice.

Hesychastic practice involves acquiring an inner stillness and ignoring the physical senses. In this, Hesychasm shows its roots in Ebagrious Pontikos and even in the Greek tradition of asceticism going back to Plato. The Hesychast interprets Christ's injunction in the Gospel of Matthew to "go into your closet to pray" to mean that one

should ignore the senses and withdraw inward. Saint John of Sinai writes: "Hesychasm is the enclosing of the bodiless primary Cognitive faculty of the soul (Orthodoxy teaches of two cognitive faculties, the nous and logos) in the bodily house of the body." (*Ladder*, Step 27, 5, (Step 27, 6 in the Holy Transfiguration edition).)

In Step 27, 21 of the *Ladder* (Step 27, 22–3 of the Holy Transfiguration edition), St John of Sinai describes Hesychast practice as follows:

Take up your seat on a high place and watch, if only you know how, and then you will see in what manner, when, whence, how many and what kind of thieves come to enter and steal your clusters of grapes. When the watchman grows weary, he stands up and prays; and then he sits down again and courageously takes up his former task.

In this passage, St John of Sinai says that the primary task of the Hesychast is to engage in mental asceticism. This mental asceticism is the rejection of tempting thoughts (the “thieves”) that come to the Hesychast as he watches in sober attention in his hermitage. Much of the literature of Hesychasm is occupied with the psychological analysis of such tempting thoughts (e.g. St Mark the Ascetic). This psychological analysis owes much to the ascetical works of Evagrius Pontikos, with its doctrine of the eight passions.

St. John Cassian is not represented in the *Philokalia* except by two brief extracts, but this is most likely due to his having written in Latin. His works (*Coenobitical Institutions* and the *Conferences*) represent a transmittal of Evagrius Pontikos’ ascetical doctrines to the West. These works formed the basis of much of the spirituality of the Order of St Benedict and its offshoots. Hence, the tradition of St John Cassian in the West concerning the spiritual practice of the hermit can be considered to be a tradition parallel to that of Hesychasm in the Orthodox Church.

The highest goal of the Hesychast is the experiential knowledge of God. In the 14th Century, a Calabrian monk, Barlaam, who although he was formally a member of the Orthodox Church had been trained in Western Scholastic theology, challenged the possibility of this experiential knowledge of God. Barlaam asserted that our knowledge of God can only be propositional. The practice of the Hesychasts was defended by St. Gregory Palamas. (See below.)

In solitude and retirement the Hesychast repeats the Jesus Prayer, "*Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.*" The Hesychast prays the Jesus Prayer 'with the heart'—with meaning, with intent, 'for real' (see *ontic*). He never treats the Jesus Prayer as a string of syllables whose 'surface' or overt verbal meaning is secondary or unimportant. He considers bare repetition of the Jesus Prayer as a mere string of syllables, perhaps with a 'mystical' inner meaning beyond the overt verbal meaning, to be worthless or even dangerous. This emphasis on the actual, real invocation of Jesus Christ marks a divergence from Eastern forms of meditation.

There is a very great emphasis on humility in the practice of the Jesus Prayer, great cautions being given in the texts about the disaster that will befall the would-be Hesychast if he proceeds in pride, arrogance or conceit. It is also assumed in the Hesychast texts that the Hesychast is a member of the Orthodox Church in good standing.

While he maintains his practice of the Jesus Prayer, which becomes automatic and continues twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the Hesychast cultivates watchful attention (Gr. *nepsis*). Sobriety contributes to this mental askesis described above that rejects tempting thoughts; it puts a great emphasis on focus and attention. The Hesychast is to pay extreme attention to the consciousness of his inner world and to the words of the Jesus Prayer, not letting his mind wander in any way at all.

The Hesychast is to attach Eros (Gr. *eros*), that is, "yearning", to his practice of sobriety so as to overcome the temptation to accidie (sloth). He is also to use an extremely directed and controlled anger against the tempting thoughts, although to obliterate them entirely he is to invoke Jesus Christ via the Jesus Prayer.

The Hesychast is to bring his mind (Gr. *nous*) into his heart so as to practice both the Jesus Prayer and sobriety with his mind in his heart. The descent of the mind into the heart is taken quite literally by the practitioners of Hesychasm and is not at all considered to be a metaphorical expression. Some of the psychophysical techniques described in the texts are to assist the descent of the mind into the heart at those times that only with difficulty it descends on its own.

The goal at this stage is a practice of the Jesus Prayer with the mind in the heart, which practice is free of images (see *Pros Theodoulon*). What this means is that by the exercise of sobriety (the

mental ascesis against tempting thoughts), the Hesychast arrives at a continual practice of the Jesus Prayer with his mind in his heart and where his consciousness is no longer encumbered by the spontaneous inception of images: his mind has a certain stillness and emptiness that is punctuated only by the eternal repetition of the Jesus Prayer.

This stage is called the *guard of the mind*. This is a very advanced stage of ascetical and spiritual practice, and attempting to accomplish this prematurely, especially with psychophysical techniques, can cause very serious spiritual and emotional harm to the would-be Hesychast. St Theophan the Recluse once remarked that bodily postures and breathing techniques were virtually forbidden in his youth, since, instead of gaining the Spirit of God, people succeeded only "in ruining their lungs."

The guard of the mind is the practical goal of the Hesychast. It is the condition in which he remains as a matter of course throughout his day, every day until he dies. It is from the guard of the mind that the Grace of God raises him to contemplation.

The Hesychast usually experiences the contemplation of God as light, the Uncreated Light of the theology of St Gregory Palamas. The Hesychast, when he has by the mercy of God been granted such an experience, does not remain in that experience for a very long time (there are exceptions—see for example the *Life* of St Savas the Fool for Christ (14th Century), written by St Philotheos Kokkinos (14th Century)), but he returns 'to earth' and continues to practice the guard of the mind.

The Uncreated Light that the Hesychast experiences are identified with the Holy Spirit. Experiences of the Uncreated Light are allied to the 'acquisition of the Holy Spirit'. Notable accounts of encounters with the Holy Spirit in this fashion are found in St Symeon the New Theologian's account of the illumination of 'George' (considered a pseudonym of St Symeon himself); in the 'conversation with Motovilov' in the *Life* of St Seraphim of Sarov (1759 – 1833); and, more recently, in the reminiscences of Elder Poerphyrios (*Wounded by Love* pp. 27 – 31).

Orthodox Tradition warns against seeking ecstasy as an end in itself. Hesychasm is a traditional complex of ascetical practices embedded in the doctrine and practice of the Orthodox Church and intended to purify the member of the Orthodox Church and to make

him ready for an encounter with God that comes to him when and if God wants, through God's Grace. The goal is to acquire, through purification and Grace, the Holy Spirit and salvation. Any ecstatic states or other unusual phenomena, which may occur in the course of Hesychast practice, are considered secondary and unimportant, even quite dangerous. Moreover, seeking after unusual 'spiritual' experiences can itself cause great harm, ruining the soul and the mind of the seeker. Such a seeking after 'spiritual' experiences can lead to *spiritual delusion* (Ru. *prelest*, Gr. *plani*)—the antonym of sobriety—in which a person believes himself or herself to be a saint, has hallucinations in which he or she 'sees' angels, Christ, etc. This state of spiritual delusion is in a superficial, egotistical way pleasurable, but can lead to madness and suicide, and, according to the Hesychast fathers, makes salvation impossible.

Mount Athos is a centre of the practice of Hesychasm. St Paisius Velichkovsky and his disciples made the practice known in Russia and Romania, although Hesychasm was already previously known in Russia, as is attested by St Seraphim of Sarov's independent practice of it.

About the year 1337 Hesychasm attracted the attention of a learned member of the Orthodox Church, Barlaam, a Calabrian monk who at that time held the office of abbot in the Monastery of St Saviour's in Constantinople and who visited Mount Athos. Mount Athos was then at the height of its fame and influence under the reign of Andronicus III Palaeologus and under the 'first-ship' of the Protos Symeon. On Mount Athos, Barlaam encountered Hesychasts and heard descriptions of their practices, also reading the writings of the teacher in Hesychasm of St Gregory Palamas, himself an Athonite monk. Trained in Western Scholastic theology, Barlaam was scandalized by Hesychasm and began to combat it both orally and in his writings. As a private teacher of theology in the Western Scholastic mode, Barlaam propounded a more intellectual and propositional approach to the knowledge of God than the Hesychasts taught.

Barlaam took exception to, as heretical and blasphemous, the doctrine entertained by the Hesychasts as to the nature of the light, the experience of which was said to be the goal of Hesychast practice. It was maintained by the Hesychasts to be of divine origin and to be identical to that light which had been manifested to Jesus' disciples on Mount Tabor at the Transfiguration. This Barlaam held to be

polytheistic, inasmuch as it postulated two eternal substances, a visible and an invisible God.

On the Hesychast side, St Gregory Palamas, afterwards Archbishop of Thessalonica, who was asked by his fellow monks on Mt Athos to defend Hesychasm from the attacks of Barlaam, took up the controversy. St Gregory himself was well educated in Greek philosophy. St Gregory defended Hesychasm in the 1340s at three different synods in Constantinople, and he also wrote a number of works in its defense.

In these works, St Gregory Palamas uses a distinction, already found in the 4th Century in the works of the Cappadocian Fathers, between the energies or operations (Gr. *energeies*) of God and the essence of God. St Gregory taught that the energies or operations of God were uncreated. He taught that the essence of God can never be known by his creature even in the next life, but that his uncreated energies or operations can be known both in this life and in the next, and convey to the Hesychast in this life and to the righteous in the next life a true spiritual knowledge of God. In Palamite theology, it is the uncreated energies of God that illumine the Hesychast who has been vouchsafed an experience of the Uncreated Light.

In 1341 the dispute came before a synod held at Constantinople and presided over by the Emperor Andronicus; the synod, taking into account the regard in which the writings of the pseudo-Dionysius were held, condemned Barlaam, who recanted and returned to Calabria, afterwards becoming bishop in the Roman Catholic Church.

One of Barlaam's friends, Gregory Akindynos, who originally was also a friend of St Gregory Palamas, took up the controversy, and three other synods on the subject were held, at the second of which the followers of Barlaam gained a brief victory. But in 1351 at a synod under the presidency of the Emperor John VI Cantacuzenus, Hesychast doctrine was established as the doctrine of the Orthodox Church.

Up to this day, the Latin Rite Catholic Church has never fully accepted Hesychasm especially the distinction between the energies or operations of God and the essence of God, and the notion that those energies or operations of God are uncreated. In Latin Rite theology as it has developed since the Scholastic period, the essence of God can be known, but only in the next life; the grace of God is always created; and the essence of God is pure act (*Actus* and force as *Actus et*

potentia), so that there can be no distinction between the energies or operations and the essence of God (see, e.g., the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas). Some of these positions depend on Aristotelian metaphysics.

The contemporary historians Cantacuzenus and Nicephorus Gregoras deal very copiously with this subject, taking the Hesychast and Barlaamite sides respectively.

Notes

1. Parry (1999), p. 230
2. Matthew 6:5–6 (King James Version)
3. Albert S Rossi. "Saying the Jesus Prayer". Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Retrieved on 2008-10-17. "Sitting, saying the Jesus Prayer, or in wordless contemplation, is not Yoga or any far Eastern practice. The difference is the Christian encounter with the living God, Jesus. The postures, techniques and outer form may be similar, but the content is unique in Christian prayer. The content of Christian prayer is Jesus."
4. Archimandrite Zacharias. "Buddhism and Eastern Asceticism Compared to Orthodox Christian Asceticism". orthodoxinfo.com. Retrieved on 2008-10-17., citing *The Hidden Man of the Heart: The Cultivation of the Heart in Orthodox Christian Anthropology*, by Archimandrite Zacharias (Waymart, PA: Mount Thabor Publishing, 2008), pp. 66-68, The Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, Essex, UK.



Zograf Monastery, one of the 20 monasteries of Mount Athos.

Chapter Four – Techniques of Meditation

There are many techniques to meditation. I will do my best to represent some of the most used and some that may be a bit more obscure or esoteric by nature. There are a wide variety of meditation techniques available, some for specific purposes and others just variations with the same ultimate purpose. However, two main categories comprise all forms. These are concentrative meditation and mindfulness meditation.

Concentrative Meditation

“Concentrative meditation focuses the attention on the breath, an image or a sound, in order to still the mind and allow a greater awareness and clarity to emerge. This is like a zoom lens in a camera; we narrow our focus to a selected field” Sitting and silently focusing on dynamics of breathing is concentrative meditation in its most basic form. Breathing is a natural and readily available object of meditation. When a person is anxious or alarmed, his breathing becomes “shallow, rigid and uneven”. But when the mind is tranquil and balanced in concentration, breathing becomes slow, deep and even. Absorbing yourself in the repetition of your breathing will allow you to reach a point of simultaneous stillness and awareness.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation’s purpose is to increase awareness of the inundation of “sensations and feelings” around oneself, but at a distance. In mindfulness meditation, you experience every aspect of your environment without consciously thinking about it. “The person sits quietly and simply witnesses whatever goes through the mind, not reacting or becoming involved with thoughts, memories worries or images.” Through this practice, meditators are said to gain an intense calmness and clarity.

The first part is about Insight Meditation. The term "Insight Meditation" (**samatha-vipassana**) refers to practices for the mind that develop calm (**samatha**) through sustained attention, and insight (**vipassana**) through reflection. A fundamental technique for sustaining attention is focusing awareness on the body; traditionally, this is practiced while sitting or walking.

The following is from **Mahasatipatthana Sutta The Great Discourse on Steadfast Mindfulness Translated by U Jotika and U Dhamminda**

Anapana Pabba (In and Out Breathing)

And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu dwell perceiving again and again the body as just the body? Here (in this teaching), bhikkhus, a bhikkhu having gone to the forest, or to the foot of a tree, or to an empty, solitary place; sits down cross-legged, keeping his body erect, and directs his mindfulness (towards the object of mindfulness). Then only with keen mindfulness he breathes in and only with keen mindfulness he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows, "I breathe in a long breath"; breathing out a long breath, he knows, "I breathe out a long breath"; breathing in a short breath, he knows, "I breathe in a short breath"; breathing out a short breath, he knows, "I breathe out a short breath", "Aware of the whole breath body, I shall breathe in", thus he trains himself; "Aware of the whole breath body, I shall breathe out", thus he trains himself. "Calming the process of breathing, I shall breathe in", thus he trains himself; "Calming the process of breathing, I shall breathe out", thus he trains himself.

Just as, bhikkhus, a skilful turner or a turner's apprentice pulling a long pull (on the string turning the lathe), knows, "I am pulling a long pull"; pulling a short pull, knows, "I am pulling a short pull", just so, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu breathing in a long breath, knows, "I breathe in a long breath"; breathing out a long breath, knows, "I breathe out a long breath"; breathing in a short breath, knows, "I breathe in a short breath"; breathing out a short breath, knows, "I breathe out a short breath". "Aware of the whole breath body, I shall breathe in," thus he trains himself; "Aware of the whole breath body, I shall breathe out", thus he trains himself. "Calming the process of breathing, I shall breathe in", thus he trains himself; "Calming the process of breathing, I shall breathe out", thus he trains himself.

Thus he dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body (not mine, not I, not self, but just a phenomenon) in himself; or he dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body in others; or he dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body in both himself and in others. He dwells perceiving again and again the cause and the actual appearing of the body; or he dwells perceiving again and again the cause and the actual dissolution of the

body; or he dwells perceiving again and again both the actual appearing and dissolution of the body with their causes. To summarize, he is firmly mindful of the fact that only the body exists (not a soul, a self or I). That mindfulness is just for gaining insight (vipassana) and mindfulness progressively. Being detached from craving and wrong views he dwells without clinging to anything in the world. Thus, bhikkhus, this is a way in which a bhikkhu dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body.

Iriyapatha Pabba (on Postures)

And again, bhikkus, a bhikkhu while walking knows "I am walking"; while standing, he knows, "I am standing"; while sitting, he knows, "I am sitting"; while lying down he knows, "I am lying down."

To summarize, a bhikkhu should know whatever way his body is moving or placed.

Thus he dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body (not mine, not I, not self, but just a phenomenon) in himself; or he dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body in others; or he dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body in both himself and in others. He dwells perceiving again and again the cause and the actual appearing of the body or he dwells perceiving again and again the cause and the actual dissolution of the body; or he dwells perceiving again and again the actual appearing and dissolution of the body with their causes. To summarize, he is firmly mindful of the fact that only the body exists (not a soul, a self or I). That mindfulness is just for gaining insight (vipassana) and mindfulness progressively. Being detached from craving and wrong views he dwells without clinging to anything in the world. Thus, bhikkhus, this is also a way in which a bhikkhu dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body.

Patikulamanasika Pabba (Contemplation of Impurities)

And again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu examines and reflects closely upon this very body, from the soles of the feet up and from the tips of the head hair down, enclosed by the skin and full of various kinds of impurities, (thinking thus) "There exists in this body: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, membranes (including the pleura, the diaphragm

and other forms of membrane in the body), spleen, lungs, intestines, mysentery, gorge, feces, brain, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, solid fat, tears, liquid fat, saliva, mucus, synovic fluid (i.e. lubricating oil of the joints) and urine."

Just as if, bhikkhus, there were a double-mouthed provision bag filled with various kinds of grain such as: hill-paddy, paddy, green-gram, cow pea, sesamum, and husked rice; and a man with sound eyes, having opened it, should examine it thus: "This is hill-paddy, this is paddy, this is green-gram, this is cow pea, this is sesamum, and this is husked rice." Just so, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu examines and reflects closely upon this very body, from the soles of the feet up and from the tips of the head hair down, enclosed by the skin and full of various kinds of impurities, (thinking thus) "There exists in this body: hair of the head, ... and urine."

Thus he dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body in himself.... Thus, bhikkhus, this is also a way in which a bhikkhu dwells perceiving again and again the body as just the body.

Here is another way to look at Insight Meditation. This is from the **Amaravati Buddhist Centre, U.K. website** (<http://www.enabling.org/ia/vipassana/Archive/A/Amaravati/introInsightMeditation.html>)

Time and Place

Focusing the mind on the body can be readily accomplished while sitting. You need to find a time and a place, which affords you calm and freedom from disturbance.

A quiet room with not much in it to distract the mind is ideal; a setting with light and space has a brightening and clearing effect, while a cluttered and gloomy room has just the opposite. Timing is also important; particularly as most people's days are quite structured with routines. It is not especially productive to meditate when you have something else to do, or when you're pressed for time. It's better to set aside a period -- say, in the early morning or in the evening after work -- when you can really give your full attention to the practice. Begin with fifteen minutes or so. Practice sincerely with the limitations of time and available energy, and avoid becoming mechanical about the routine. Meditation practice, supported by genuine willingness to

investigate and make peace with oneself, will develop naturally in terms of duration and skill.

Awareness of the body

The development of calm is aided by stability, and by a steady but peaceful effort. If you can't feel settled, there's no peacefulness; if there's no sense of application, you tend to day-dream. One of the most effective postures for the cultivation of the proper combination of stillness and energy is sitting.

Use a posture that will keep your back straight without strain. A simple upright chair may be helpful, or you may be able to use one of the lotus postures. These look awkward at first, but in time they can provide a unique balance of gentle firmness that gladdens the mind without tiring the body.

If the chin is tilted very slightly down this will help, but do not allow the head to loll forward as this encourages drowsiness. Place the hands on your lap, palms upwards, one gently resting on the other with the thumb-tips touching. Take your time, and get the right balance.

Now, collect your attention, and begin to move it slowly down your body. Notice the sensations. Relax any tensions, particularly in the face, neck and hands. Allow the eyelids to close or half close.

Investigate how you are feeling. Expectant or tense? Then relax your attention a little. With this, the mind will probably calm down, and you may find some thoughts drifting in -- reflections, daydreams, memories, or doubts about whether you are doing it right! Instead of following or contending with these thought patterns, bring more attention to the body, which is a useful anchor for a wandering mind.

Cultivate a spirit of inquiry in your meditation attitude. Take your time. Move your attention, for example, systematically from the crown of the head down over the whole body. Notice the different sensations -- such as warmth, pulsing, numbness, and sensitivity -- in the joints of each finger, the moisture of the palms, and the pulse in the wrist. Even areas that may have no particular sensation, such as the forearms or the earlobes, can be "swept over" in an attentive way. Notice how even the lack of sensation is something the mind can be aware of. This constant and sustained investigation is called mindfulness (**sati**) and is one of the primary tools of Insight Meditation.

Mindfulness of breathing (anapanasati)

Instead of "body sweeping", or after a preliminary period of this practice, mindfulness can be developed through attention on the breath.

First, follow the sensation of your ordinary breath as it flows in through the nostrils and fills the chest and abdomen. Then try maintaining your attention at one point, either at the diaphragm or -- a more refined location -- at the nostrils. Breath has a tranquillizing quality, steady and relaxing if you don't force it; this is helped by an upright posture. Your mind may wander, but keep patiently returning to the breath.

It is not necessary to develop concentration to the point of excluding everything else except the breath. Rather than to create a trance, the purpose here is to allow you to notice the workings of the mind, and to bring a measure of peaceful clarity into it. The entire process -- gathering your attention, noticing the breath, noticing that the mind has wandered, and re-establishing your attention -- develops mindfulness, patience and insightful understanding. So don't be put off by apparent "failure" -- simply begin again. Continuing in this way allows the mind eventually to calm down.

If you get very restless or agitated, just relax. Practice being at peace with yourself, listening to -- without necessarily believing in -- the voices of the mind.

If you feel drowsy, then put more care and attention into your body and posture. Refining your attention or pursuing tranquility at such times will only make matters worse!

WALKING AND STANDING

Many meditation exercises, such as the above "mindfulness of breathing", are practiced while sitting. However, walking is commonly alternated with sitting as a form for meditation. Apart from giving you different things to notice, it's a skilful way to energize the practice if the calming effect of sitting is making you dull.

If you have access to some open land, measure off about 25-30 paces' length of level ground (or a clearly defined pathway between two trees), as your meditation path. Stand at one end of the path, and compose your mind on the sensations of the body. First, let the attention rest on the feeling of the body standing upright, with the arms

hanging naturally and the hands lightly clasped in front or behind. Allow the eyes to gaze at a point about three meters in front of you at ground level, thus avoiding visual distraction. Now, walk gently, at a deliberate but "normal" pace, to the end of the path. Stop. Focus on the body standing for the period of a couple of breaths. Turn, and walk back again. While walking, be aware of the general flow of physical sensations, or more closely direct your attention to the feet. The exercise for the mind is to keep bringing its attention back to the sensation of the feet touching the ground, the spaces between each step, and the feelings of stopping and starting.

Of course, the mind will wander. So it is important to cultivate patience, and the resolve to begin again. Adjust the pace to suit your state of mind -- vigorous when drowsy or trapped in obsessive thought, firm but gentle when restless and impatient. At the end of the path, stop; breathe in and out; "let go" of any restlessness, worry, calm, bliss, memories or opinions about yourself. The "inner chatter" may stop momentarily, or fade out. Begin again. In this way you continually refresh the mind, and allow it to settle at its own rate.

In more confined spaces, alter the length of the path to suit what is available. Alternatively, you can circumambulate a room, pausing after each circumambulation for a few moments of standing. This period of standing can be extended to several minutes, using "body sweeping".

Walking brings energy and fluidity into the practice, so keep your pace steady and just let changing conditions pass through the mind. Rather than expecting the mind to be as still as it might be while sitting, contemplate the flow of phenomena. It is remarkable how many times we can become engrossed in a train of thought -- arriving at the end of the path and "coming to" with a start! -- but it is natural for our untrained minds to become absorbed in thoughts and moods. So instead of giving in to impatience, learn how to let go, and begin again. A sense of ease and calm may then arise, allowing the mind to become open and clear in a natural, unforced way.

LYING DOWN

Reclining at the end of a day, spend a few minutes meditating while lying on one side. Keep the body quite straight and bend one arm up so that the hand acts as a support for the head. Sweep through the body, resting its stresses; or collect your attention on the breath,

consciously putting aside memories of the day just past and expectations of tomorrow. In a few minutes, with your mind clear, you'll be able to rest well.

CULTIVATING THE HEART

Cultivating good-will (metta) gives another dimension to the practice of Insight. Meditation naturally teaches patience and tolerance, or at least it shows the importance of these qualities. So you may well wish to develop a more friendly and caring attitude towards yourself and other people. In meditation, you can cultivate good-will very realistically.

Focus attention on the breath, which you will now be using as the means of spreading kindness and good-will. Begin with yourself, with your body. Visualize the breath as a light, or see your awareness as being a warm ray, and gradually sweep it over your body. Lightly focus your attention on the centre of the chest, around the heart region. As you breathe in, direct patient kindness towards yourself, perhaps with the thought, "May I be well", or "Peace". As you breathe out, let the mood of that thought, or the awareness of light, spread outwards from the heart, through the body, through the mind, and beyond yourself. "May others be well."

If you are experiencing negative states of mind, breathe in the qualities of tolerance and forgiveness. Visualizing the breath as having a healing color may be helpful. On the out-breath, let go -- of any stress, worry or negativity -- and extend the sense of release through the body, the mind, and beyond, as before.

This practice can form all or part of a period of meditation -- you have to judge for yourself what is appropriate. The calming effect of meditating with a kindly attitude is good for beginning a sitting, but there will no doubt be times to use this approach for long periods, to go deeply into the heart.

Always begin with what you are aware of, even if it seems trivial or confused. Let your mind rest calmly on that -- whether it's boredom, an aching knee, or the frustration of not feeling particularly kindly. Allow these to be; practice being at peace with them. Recognize and gently put aside any tendencies towards laziness, doubt or guilt.

Peacefulness can develop into a very nourishing kindness towards yourself, if you first of all fully accept the presence of what you dislike. Keep the attention steady, and open the heart to whatever you experience. This does not imply approval of negative states, but allows them a space wherein they can come and go.

Generating good-will toward the world beyond yourself follows much the same pattern. A simple way to spread kindness is to work in stages. Start with yourself, joining the sense of loving acceptance to the movement of the breath. "May I be well." Then, reflect on people you love and respect, and wish them well, one by one. Move on to friendly acquaintances, then to those towards whom you feel indifferent. "May they be well." Finally, bring to mind those people you fear or dislike, and continue to send out wishes of good-will.

This meditation can expand, in a movement of compassion, to include all people in the world, in their many circumstances. And remember, you don't have to feel that you love everyone in order to wish them well!

Kindness and compassion originate from the same source of good will, and they broaden the mind beyond the purely personal perspective. If you're not always trying to make things go the way you want them to; if you're more accepting and receptive to yourself and others as they are, compassion arises by itself. Compassion is the natural sensitivity of the heart.

Loving Kindness Practice

As taught by Ven. Pannyavaro

An Overview of Loving-kindness Meditation

Loving-kindness meditation can be brought in to support the practice of 'bare attention' to help keep the mind open and sweet. It provides the essential balance to support your insight meditation practice.

It is a fact of life that many people are troubled by difficult emotional states in the pressured societies we live in, but do little in terms of developing skills to deal with them. Yet even when the mind goes sour it is within most people's capacity to arouse positive feelings to sweeten it. Loving-kindness is a meditation practice taught by the

Buddha to develop the mental habit of selfless or altruistic love. In the Dhammapada can be found the saying: "Hatred cannot coexist with loving-kindness, and dissipates if supplanted with thoughts based on loving-kindness."

Loving-kindness is a meditation practice, which brings about positive attitudinal changes as it systematically develops the quality of 'loving-acceptance'. It acts, as it were, as a form of self-psychotherapy, a way of healing the troubled mind to free it from its pain and confusion. Of all Buddhist meditations, loving-kindness has the immediate benefit of sweetening and changing old habituated negative patterns of mind.

To put it into its context, Loving-kindness is the first of a series of meditations that produce four qualities of love: Friendliness (*metta*), Compassion (*karuna*), Appreciative Joy (*mudita*) and Equanimity (*upekkha*). The quality of 'friendliness' is expressed as warmth that reaches out and embraces others. When loving-kindness practice matures it naturally overflows into compassion, as one empathizes with other people's difficulties; on the other hand one needs to be wary of pity, as its near enemy, as it merely mimics the quality of concern without empathy. The positive expression of empathy is an appreciation of other people's good qualities or good fortune, or appreciative joy, rather than feelings of jealousy towards them. This series of meditations comes to maturity as 'on-looking equanimity'. This 'engaged equanimity' must be cultivated within the context of this series of meditations, or there is a risk of it manifesting as its near enemy, indifference or aloofness. So, ultimately you remain kindly disposed and caring toward everybody with an equal spread of loving feelings and acceptance in all situations and relationships.

How to do it . . .

The practice always begins with developing a loving acceptance of yourself. If resistance is experienced then it indicates that feelings of unworthiness are present. No matter, this means there is work to be done, as the practice itself is designed to overcome any feelings of self-doubt or negativity. Then you are ready to systematically develop loving-kindness towards others.

Four Types of Persons to develop loving-kindness towards:

- a respected, beloved person - such as a spiritual teacher;
- a dearly beloved - which could be a close family member or friend;

- a neutral person - somebody you know, but have no special feelings towards, e.g.: a person who serves you in a shop;
- a hostile person - someone you are currently having difficulty with.

Starting with yourself, then systematically sending loving-kindness from person to person in the above order will have the effect of breaking down the barriers between the four types of people and yourself. This will have the effect of breaking down the divisions within your own mind, the source of much of the conflict we experience. Just a word of caution if you are practicing intensively. It is best if you choose a member of the same sex or, if you have a sexual bias to your own sex, a person of the opposite sex. This is because of the risk that the near enemy of loving-kindness, lust, can be aroused. Try different people to practice on, as some people do not easily fit into the above categories, but do try to keep to the prescribed order.

Ways of arousing feelings of loving-kindness:

1. **Visualization** - Bring up a mental picture. See yourself or the person the feeling is directed at smiling back at you or just being joyous.
2. **By reflection** - Reflect on the positive qualities of a person and the acts of kindness they have done. And to yourself, making an affirmation, a positive statement about yourself, using your own words.
3. **Auditory** - This is the simplest way but probably the most effective. Repeat an internalized mantra or phrase such as 'loving-kindness'.

The visualizations, reflections and the repetition of loving-kindness are devices to help you arouse positive feelings of loving-kindness. You can use all of them or one that works best for you. When the positive feeling arise, switch from the devices to the feeling, as it is the feeling that is the primary focus. Keep the mind fixed on the feeling, if it strays bring it back to the device, or if the feelings weaken or are lost then return to the device, i.e. use the visualization to bring back or strengthen the feeling.

The second stage is Directional Pervasion where you systematically project the aroused feeling of loving-kindness to all points of the compass: north, south, east and west, up and down, and all around. This directional pervasion will be enhanced by bringing to

mind loving friends and like-minded communities you know in the cities, towns and countries around the world.

Non-specific Pervasion tends to spontaneously happen as the practice matures. It is not discriminating. It has no specific object and involves just naturally radiating feelings of universal love. When it arises the practice has then come to maturity in that it has changed particular, preferential love, which is an attached love, to an all-embracing unconditional love!

Loving-kindness is a heart meditation and should not to be seen as just a formal sitting practice removed from everyday life. So take your good vibes outside into the streets, at home, at work and into your relationships. Applying the practice to daily life is a matter of directing a friendly attitude and having openness toward everybody you relate to, without discrimination.

There are as many different ways of doing it, as there are levels of intensity in the practice. This introduction is intended to help you familiarize yourself with the basic technique, so that you can become established in the practice before going on, if you wish, to the deeper, systematic practice - to the level of meditative absorption.

This is based on the Visuddhimagga, The Path of Purification, is for meditators who are prepared to develop loving-kindness meditation to its fullest and thereby experience the deeper aspects of the practice.

A benefit of developing the five absorption factors of concentration through the systematic practice is that it will counteract the Five Mental Hindrances of the meditator: Sensuality; that is, all forms of Ill Will, Mental inertia; Restlessness and Skeptical Doubt. When the meditator achieves full concentration, five absorption factors are present: the first two are casual factors: Applied thought and Sustained thought, followed by three effects: Rapture, Ease-of-mind and One-pointedness or unification of mind. The five absorption factors have a one-to-one correspondence to the five mental hindrances, or obstacles, to the meditator: Applied thought, by arousing energy and effort, overcomes the hindrance of sloth and torpor; Sustained thought, by steadying the mind, overcomes skeptical doubt which has the characteristic of wavering; Rapture with its uplifting effervescence, prevails over feelings of ill-will; Ease-of-mind, by relieving accumulated stress, counteracts restlessness or

agitation of mind; while One-pointedness restrains the mind's wanderings in the sense-fields to inhibit sensuality. The benefit of achieving deep concentration with this positive mindset is that it will tend to imprint the new positive conditioning while overriding the old negative patterns. In this way, old negative habits are changed, thereby freeing one to form new, positive ways of relating.

Silent Meditation

My first introduction to mediation was from a book a friend gave me back in 1993. The book was written by Ashvagosha, *The Awakening of Faith* and is one of the most concise works on Mahayana Buddhism, and was translated at an early date from the Sanskrit to the Chinese. The original Sanskrit text is lost. The *Awakening of Faith* has been used as a textbook for Buddhist priests. This first translation into English; is by Teitaro Suzuki, one of the principal writers on Buddhism of the 20th century. Suzuki, a Zen Buddhist scholar, manages to convey the difficult sense of this work, which sometimes requires inventive English neologisms. You can read it on line at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/taf/index.htm>

How should they practice cessation [or tranquilization, *çamatha*] and intellectual insight (*vidarçana* or *vipaçyana*)?

To bring all mental states that produce frivolous sophistries to a stand is called cessation. To understand adequately the law of causality and transformation is called intellectual insight. The beginner should practice each of them separately. But when by degrees he obtains facility and finally attains to perfection, the two will naturally become harmonized.

Those who practice cessation should dwell in solitude (*âranyaka*) and, sitting cross-legged rectify the attitude and pacify the mind. Do not fix the thoughts on the breath (*ânâpânasmṛti*) ; do not fix the thoughts on the forms (*saṃjñâ*) and colors; do not fix the thoughts on space (*âkâça*); do not fix the thoughts on earth, water, fire, and ether; do not fix the thoughts on what you see, hear, learn, or memorize (*vijñânakṛtsnâyatana*) . All particularizations, imaginations and recollections should be excluded from consciousness, even the idea of exclusion being excluded; because [the suchness of] all things is uncreated, eternal, and devoid of all attributes (*alakshana*).

[Now in the constant flux of thoughts,] that which precedes [i.e., a sensation] has been awakened by an external object; so the next [step to be taken by the practicer] is to abandon the idea of an external world. Then that which succeeds [in that constant flux of thoughts] is elaborated in his own mind; so he should in turn abandon reflection [or thought]. In short, as his attention is distracted by the external world [outer *vishaya*], he is warned to turn it to inner consciousness [inner *citta*]; while as his retrospection in turn calls forth a succession of thoughts [or ideal associations], he is again warned not to attach himself to the latter; because, independent of suchness, they [thoughts] have no existence of their own.

At all times, while moving, standing, sitting, or lying, the practicer should constantly discipline himself as above stated. Gradually entering the samâdhi of suchness, he will finally vanquish all prejudices (*kleṣa* or *âṣrava*), be strengthened in faith (*ṣraddhâ*),-- and immediately attain to the state of never-returning (*avaivartikatva*). But those who are skeptical, sacrilegious, destitute of faith, encumbered with the hindrances (*âvarana*) of karma, arrogant, or indolent, are not entitled to enter therein.

And again when the practicer by virtue of his samâdhi attains an immediate insight into the nature of the universe (*dharmadhâtu*), he will recognize that the Dharmakâya of all Tathâgatas and the body of all beings are one and the same (*samatâ*), are consubstantial (*ekalakshana*). On that account it is also called the samâdhi of oneness (*ekalakshanasamâdhi*). By disciplining oneself in this samâdhi, one can obtain infinite samâdhis, because suchness is the source of all samâdhis.

Further, through the influence of those evil ones the practicer may sometimes be inordinately susceptible to dissatisfaction or delight; he may sometimes be too misanthropic or too philanthropic; he may sometimes be inclined to enjoy drowsiness; he may sometimes not sleep for a long time; he may sometimes be affected by diseases; he may sometimes remain discouraged and indolent; he may sometimes rise all on a sudden with full energy, but only to sink down again into languor; he may sometimes, being over-skeptical, not believe in anything; he may sometimes, abandoning the excellent religious observance, enjoy himself in frivolous occupations, indulge in worldly affairs, gratify his desires and inclinations; he may sometimes attain to the samâdhi of heretics [i.e., *tîrthaka*] and,

remaining in a state of trance a day or two, or even seven, and being supplied imaginarily with some palatable food and drink, and feeling very comfortable mentally and physically, he may have no sensation of hunger or thirst; he may sometimes be induced to enjoy female fascinations; he may sometimes be very irregular in taking meals, either too much or too little; he may sometimes look either very handsome or very ugly in appearance.

If the practicer gets enraptured by those visions and prejudices (*kleṣa*), he will lose his root of merit (*kuṣalamūla*) accumulated in his previous existences. Therefore he should exercise a deep and thorough contemplation, thinking that all those [heretical states of samādhi] are the temptations of Māras or evil spirits that take advantage of his deficiency in merits and his intensity of karma-hindrances (*karmāvarana*).

After this thought he should make another thought, viz., that all these are nothing but mental hallucinations. When he makes these thoughts, the visions and imaginations will instantly disappear, and, becoming free from all attributes [of limitation], he will enter into the true samādhi. He has then not only liberated himself from all modes of subjectivity, he has also effaced the idea of suchness. Even when he rises up from a deep meditation, no visionary images, no prejudices will take possession of in his mind, since he has destroyed the root of illusion through the power of the samādhi. On the contrary, he will constantly perform all the excellent and virtuous deeds, which are in conformity with suchness, while he, who now exhibiting great spiritual energy will never become exhausted, will remove all hindrances without exception.

Those who do not practice this kind of samādhi will not be able to enter into the essence of the Tathāgata, for all other samādhis practiced in common with the tīrthakas have invariably some attributes [of imperfection] and do not enable one to come into the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Therefore let Bodhisattvas [who aspire to the highest knowledge] assiduously apply themselves to the discipline and attain to the perfection of this samādhi.

Basically it all boils down to sitting with the thought of nothing, not even the thought of nothing. The past is hazy as a dream, and the present like lightening, and future is like clouds rising up suddenly.

Centering Prayer as taught by Fr. Thomas Keating has revolutionized the modern church in a tremendous way. Here is how he explains the technique of Centering Prayer. (used by permission from <http://centeringprayer.com>)

Contemplative Prayer

We may think of prayer as thoughts or feelings expressed in words. But this is only one expression. In the Christian tradition Contemplative Prayer is considered to be the pure gift of God. It is the opening of mind and heart – our whole being – to God, the Ultimate Mystery, beyond thoughts, words, and emotions. Through grace we open our awareness to God whom we know by faith is within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than choosing - closer than consciousness itself.

Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer is a method designed to facilitate the development of Contemplative Prayer by preparing our faculties to receive this gift. It is an attempt to present the teaching of earlier times in an updated form. Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer; rather it casts a new light and depth of meaning on them. It is at the same time a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. This method of prayer is a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him.

Theological Background

The source of Centering Prayer, as in all methods leading to Contemplative Prayer, is the indwelling Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The focus of Centering Prayer is the deepening of our relationship with the living Christ. It tends to build communities of faith and bond the members together in mutual friendship and love.

The Root of Centering Prayer

Listening to the word of God in Scripture (Lectio Divina) is a traditional way of cultivating friendship with Christ. It is a way of listening to the texts of Scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ and He was suggesting the topics of conversation. The daily

encounter with Christ and reflection on His word leads beyond mere acquaintanceship to an attitude of friendship, trust, and love. Conversation simplifies and gives way to communing. Gregory the Great (6th century) in summarizing the Christian contemplative tradition expressed it as “resting in God.” This was the classical meaning of Contemplative Prayer in the Christian tradition for the first sixteen centuries.

Wisdom Saying of Jesus

Centering Prayer is based on the wisdom saying of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount : “...*But when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you*” MT 6:6 It is also inspired by writings of major contributors to the Christian contemplative heritage including John Cassian, the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Francis de Sales, Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Thomas Merton.

Centering Prayer Guidelines

I. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God’s presence and action within. (*Open Mind, Open Heart*, Thomas Keating)

1. The sacred word expresses our intention to consent to God’s presence and action within.
2. The sacred word is chosen during a brief period of prayer to the Holy Spirit. Use a word of one or two syllables, such as: God, Jesus, Abba, Father, Mother, Mary, Amen. Other possibilities include: Love, Listen, Peace, Mercy, Let Go, Silence, Stillness, Faith, Trust.
3. Instead of a sacred word, a simple inward glance toward the Divine Presence, or noticing one’s breath may be more suitable for some persons. The same guidelines apply to these symbols as to the sacred word.
4. The sacred word is sacred not because of its inherent meaning, but because of the meaning we give it as the expression of our intention to consent.

5. Having chosen a sacred word, we do not change it during the prayer period because that would be engaging thoughts.

II. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.

1. "Sitting comfortably" means relatively comfortably so as not to encourage sleep during the time of prayer.
2. Whatever sitting position we choose, we keep the back straight.
3. We close our eyes as a symbol of letting go of what is going on around and within us.
4. We introduce the sacred word inwardly as gently as laying a feather on a piece of absorbent cotton.
5. Should we fall asleep upon awakening we continue the prayer.

III. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.

1. "Thoughts" is an umbrella term for every perception, including body sensations, sense perceptions, feelings, images, memories, plans, reflections, concepts, commentaries, and spiritual experiences.
2. Thoughts are an inevitable, integral and normal part of Centering Prayer.
3. By "returning over so-gently to the sacred word" a minimum of effort is indicated. This is the only activity we initiate during the time of Centering Prayer.
4. During the course of Centering Prayer, the sacred word may become vague or disappear.

IV. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

1. The additional 2 minutes enables us to bring the atmosphere of silence into everyday life.
2. If this prayer is done in a group, the leader may slowly recite a prayer such as the Lord's Prayer while others listen.

Chapter Five -Positions To Use for Meditation

The following is from

<http://www.chikung-unlimited.com/Meditation-Positions-2.html>



Shuang-Pan or **Full Lotus Pose:** This is a well known position that many people associate with meditative positions, particularly for Indian Yogis.

Both legs cross in the sitting position, with alternate feet resting on top of the thighs.

At the advance levels, you can place your palms on the soles of the feet to complete the connection of *chi* pathways in the body.



Dan Pan or **Half Lotus Pose:** If you are not very flexible, you may want to work your way slowly to this position before attempting the full lotus.

This is also one of the better known meditation positions.

Unlike the Full Lotus, this one requires only one foot to rest on the opposite crossed thigh, while the other foot rests beneath the opposing crossed leg.



Kua He Zuo or "**Straddling the Crane**" Pose: In this body posture, you are not sitting with your legs crossed. Instead, squat down, and tuck your feet beneath your buttocks in a sitting position.

If you find this difficult to do, you can place a meditation cushion or pillow underneath to soften the surface on which you are sitting.



Sitting on a chair: For older practitioners, it is easier to just sit on a chair. If you find sitting postures on the floor uncomfortable, you can try this on a bench or chair:

1. Sit on the edge of a chair or bench, with only the buttocks and not the thighs resting on the surface.
2. Place your feet flat on the floor, parallel to each other, shoulder-width apart with toes pointing forward.
3. Your knees should be bent 90°, your thighs relaxed so that when you pat them underneath, they should wobble like jelly.

4. Straighten your back to align the vertebrae and the channels along which the vital *chi* energy flows.
5. Just as in standing poses and body postures, your shoulders should be drooping and chest slightly caved in.
6. Likewise, tilt the head so that the chin is slightly tucked in to align your head with the rest of your posture.
7. Relax the arms, bending your elbows, with your palms resting face down on your lap, fingers slightly bent and spread apart in a natural position.
8. As in all chi kung/qigong meditation positions, let your tongue rest in a natural position between the upper palate and the ridge of your upper teeth to form a bridge for your *chi* energy to flow.

San Pan or **Cross-Legged Position**: This is the easiest and most common of all meditation positions to assume when sitting on the floor: cross the legs so that the calves meet, with the heels placed under the opposite thighs.

These are all the meditation postures for qigong sitting meditation. The following outlines the steps for all cross-legged sitting body poses on the floor:

For all males, sit with the left leg crossed on the outside and the right leg crossed inside. This is the yang position and will help to balance the *yin* and *yang chi* energies in males who are generally innately yang.

Females have the option of assuming the same position or placing the right leg on the outside.

However with experienced practice, female practitioners become sensitive to and generate large quantities of *yang chi*, so should also assume the male position consistently like male practitioners.

As with all meditation postures and body poses, straighten the vertebrae, drop the shoulders and chest, tuck in the chin and place the tongue against the palate.

The arms should be relaxed with the hands resting on the Lower Dantian, on the thighs, or assuming a mudra position, (see Hand and Finger Positions).

Familiarize yourself with these steps to the different meditation positions and body poses for qigong sitting meditation. With practice, they will become natural and automatic, facilitating your meditation and *chi* circulation.

Chapter Six -Advice on Meditation

The following was written by Sogyal Rinpoche, and used from the <http://buddhanet.net> site.

When you read books about meditation, or often when meditation is presented by different groups, much of the emphasis falls on the techniques. In the West, people tend to be very interested in the "technology" of meditation. However, by far the most important feature of meditation is not technique, but the way of being, the spirit, which is called the "posture", a posture which is not so much physical, but more to do with spirit or attitude.

It is well to recognize that when you start on a meditation practice, you are entering a totally different dimension of reality. Normally in life we put a great deal of effort into achieving things, and there is a lot of struggle involved, whereas meditation is just the opposite, it is a break from how we normally operate.

Meditation is simply a question of being, of melting, like a piece of butter left in the sun. It has nothing to do with whether or not you "know" anything about it, in fact, each time you practice meditation it should be fresh, as if it were happening for the very first time. You just quietly sit, your body still, your speech silent, your mind at ease, and allow thoughts to come and go, without letting them play havoc on you. If you need something to do, then watch the breathing. This is a very simple process. When you are breathing out, know that you are breathing out. When you breath in, know that you are breathing in, without supplying any kind of extra commentary or internalized mental gossip, but just identifying with the breath. That very simple process of mindfulness processes your thoughts and emotions, and then, like an old skin being shed, something is peeled off and freed.

Usually people tend to relax the body by concentrating on different parts. Real relaxation comes when you relax from within, for then everything else will ease itself out quite naturally.

When you begin to practice, you center yourself, in touch with your "soft spot", and just remain there. You need not focus on anything in particular to begin with. Just be spacious, and allow thoughts and emotions to settle. If you do so, then later, when you use a method such as watching the breath, your attention will more easily be on your breathing. There is no particular point on the breath on which you need to focus, it is simply the process of breathing. Twenty-five percent of your attention is on the breath, and seventy-five percent is relaxed. Try to actually identify with the breathing, rather than just watching it. You may choose an object, like a flower, for example, to focus upon. Sometimes you are taught to visualize a light on the forehead, or in the heart. Sometimes a sound or a mantra can be used. But at the beginning it is best to simply be spacious, like the sky. Think of yourself as the sky, holding the whole universe.

When you sit, let things settle and allow all your discordant self with its unguineness and unnaturalness to dissolve, out of that rises your real being. You experience an aspect of yourself which is more genuine and more authentic-the "real" you. As you go deeper, you begin to discover and connect with your fundamental goodness.

The whole point of meditation is to get used to the that aspect which you have forgotten. In Tibetan "meditation" means "getting used to". Getting used to what? to your true nature, your Buddha nature. This is why, in the highest teaching of Buddhism, Dzogchen, you are told to "rest in the nature of mind". You just quietly sit and let all thoughts and concepts dissolve. It is like when the clouds dissolve or the mist evaporates, to reveal the clear sky and the sun shining down. When everything dissolves like this, you begin to experience your true nature, to "live". Then you know it, and at that moment, you feel really good. It is unlike any other feeling of well being that you might have experienced. This is a real and genuine goodness, in which you feel a deep sense of peace, contentment and confidence about yourself.

It is good to meditate when you feel inspired. Early mornings can bring that inspiration, as the best moments of the mind are early in the day, when the mind is calmer and fresher (the time traditionally recommended is before dawn). It is more appropriate to sit when you are inspired, for not only is it easier then as you are in a better frame of mind for meditation, but you will also be more encouraged by the very practice that you do. This in turn will bring more confidence in the

practice, and later on you will be able to practice when you are not inspired. There is no need to meditate for a long time: just remain quietly until you are a little open and able to connect with your heart essence. That is the main point.

After that, some integration, or meditation in action. Once your mindfulness has been awakened by your meditation, your mind is calm and your perception a little more coherent. Then, whatever you do, you are present, right there. As in the famous Zen master's saying: "When I eat, I eat; when I sleep, I sleep". Whatever you do, you are fully present in the act. Even washing dishes, if it is done one-pointedly, can be very energizing, freeing, cleansing. You are more peaceful, so you are more "you". You assume the "Universal You".

One of the fundamental points of the spiritual journey is to persevere along the path. Though one's meditation may be good one day and not so good the next, like changes in scenery, essentially it is not the experiences, good or bad which count so much, but rather that when you persevere, the real practice rubs off on you and comes through both good and bad. Good and bad are simply apparations, just as there may be good or bad weather, yet the sky is always unchanging. If you persevere and have that sky like attitude of spaciousness, without being perturbed by emotions and experiences, you will develop stability and the real profoundness of meditation will take effect. You will find that gradually and almost unnoticed, your attitude begins to change. You do not hold on to things as solidly as before, or grasp at them so strongly, and though crisis will still happen, you can handle them a bit better with more humor and ease. You will even be able to laugh at difficulties a little, since there is more space between you and them, and you are freer of yourself. Things become less solid, slightly ridiculous, and you become more lighthearted.

Chapter Seven – Resources for Meditation

For many finding the right props, or cushions to sit on may seem overwhelming. I will list several good companies that you can visit to find these tools. You can also use many search engines on the internet to also find links to many wholesalers and suppliers.

Meditation Pads

<http://shadeofthebotree.com> (*I have used this lady and she hand sews each zabutton and zafu, great prices too.*)

<http://www.santosha.com/>

<http://www.barefootyoga.com/>

<http://storesense04.dynamic.net/bheka/StoreFront.bok>

<http://www.matsmatsmats.com/yoga/yoga-mats.html>

Yoga Blankets (great to wrap up in meditating)

<http://www.santosha.com/> (*they have a great prices*)

<http://www.barefootyoga.com/>

<http://storesense04.dynamic.net/bheka/StoreFront.bok>

BackJacks

http://www.santosha.com/BackJack-Chair_p_1244.html (*this is great for someone with lower back pain to be able to sit for long periods*)

Chapter Eight –Hand Mudras

The following and used from the <http://www.healthandyoga.com/HTML/meditation/mudras.html> site.

The physical body is made up of five elements namely - Air, Water, Fire, Earth and Aakash (ether - the tiny intercellular spaces in the human body).

Imbalance of these elements disrupts the immunity system and causes disease.

Deficiencies in any of these elements can be made up by connecting one part of the body with another in a particular manner through Mudras.

When a finger representing an element is brought into contact with the thumb, that element is brought into balance. Therefore the disease caused by the imbalance is cured. Mudras start electromagnetic currents within the body which balance various constituting elements and restore health. The joining of fingers creates an effect on the human body

Five Fingers for Five Elements * Thumb Fire * Index Air * Middle Aakash * Ring Earth * Little Water

Gyan Mudra Effective in cases of mental ailment, imparts happiness, the intellect develops, memory is sharpened.

Method Join the tips of the index finger and thumb and keep the other 3 fingers stretched and joined.



Prana Mudra Helps in pumping the life force into your body. Beneficial for all types of diseases. Imparts special power to the eyes.

Method Join the tip of the thumb with tip of little and ring finger. Keeping other two fingers straight.



(the following is from <http://www.yogsadhna.com/spiritualmudra.asp>)

Poorna Gyan Mudra

How & When: The hand position is the same as Gyan Mudra for this Spiritual Mudra, except for the position of hands. The right hand is kept close to the chest with palm facing forward in Gyan Mudra and the left hand which is also in Gyan Mudra is kept on the left knee with palm facing up. The best time for this Mudra is during meditation.

Benefits:

- a) This Mudra improves memory to a great extent
- b) It relaxes the nervous system and calms the irritable temperaments
- c) The Mudra bestows intelligence and wisdom. This Mudra was generally performed by Seers and Yogis as the time of giving blessings to the disciples and students.
- d) It causes electrical changes in the electromagnetic activity of the brain leading to increased clarity and understanding
- e) This Mudra also adds to the Aura and Prana of the practitioner.

Cup/Chalice Mudra

How & When: This is a two hand Mudra. To perform this Mudra keep

the right hand in the lap facing up and then keep the left hand over the right hand with the thumbs joined together pointing up (one may also do it alternatively by keeping one set of fingers over the other set of fingers facing up and the thumbs joined pointing up) to form a cup with the hands. The order is to match the yoga asana. You would place the right hand on top of the left hand if the right leg is on top of the left leg and vice-versa.



Benefits:

- a) This Mudra focuses on helping you balance your right-left energies. It promotes balance of the male-female energies.
- b) This Mudra immediately lets u connect to self and also activates and balances the Sacral Chakra and Root Chakra.

Abhay Mudra

How & When: "Abhay" means "fearless". Abhay Mudra represents protection, courage, and dispelling of fear. It acts like a shield for the practitioner. The Mudra is kept naturally with fingers joint, thumb close to fingers by the side of the head facing forward. One often sees Lord Buddha Meditating in this hand gesture,

Benefits:

- a) Mind becomes fearless.
- b) Gives a feeling of courage and strength.
- c) It gives one the will power to take challenges and face them bravely.

d) This Mudra, which initially appears to be a natural gesture, was probably used from prehistoric times as a sign of good intentions - the hand raised and unarmed proposes friendship, or at least peace; since antiquity, it was a plain way of showing that you meant no harm since you did not carry any weapon

Dhyana Mudra

How & When: The Dhyana Mudra is generally performed by both hands. According to tradition, this Mudra derives from the one assumed by the Buddha when meditating under the Peepal tree before his Enlightenment. The hands are generally held at the level of the stomach or on the thighs or to be more precise in the lap. The right hand is placed above the left, with the palms facing upwards, and the fingers extended. In some cases the thumbs of the two hands may touch at the tips, thus forming a mystic triangle. The esoteric sects obviously attribute to this triangle a multitude of meanings, the most important being the identification with the mystic fire that consumes all impurities.

Benefits:

- a) The Dhyana Mudra is the Mudra of meditation and of concentration and of the attainment of spiritual perfection.,
- b) It is generally prescribed to students to increase focusing ability as concentration exercise. It indicates the perfect balance of thought, rest of the senses, and tranquility.
- c) The Dhyana Mudra helps mortals achieve this transformation.

(the following is used from:

<http://www.shreevedic.com/vedictech/mudraenergylanding.asp>)

Mudra Yoga: Attitudes of Energy Flow

The Sanskrit word mudra is translated as ‘gesture’ or ‘attitude’. Mudras can be described as psychic, emotional, devotional and aesthetic gestures or attitudes. Yogis have experienced mudra yoga as attitudes of energy flow, intended to link individual pranic force with universal or cosmic force.

Mudra Yogas are a combination of subtle physical movements which alter mood, attitude and perception, and which deepen awareness and concentration. A mudra may involve the whole body in a combination of asana, pranayama, bandha and visualization techniques or it may be a simple hand position.

Mudra Yoga can be best described as an aid to uniting with God through signs and symbols. Mudra Yoga is associated with the Ajna center, or Spiritual Eye, which is situated in the middle of the forehead at the root of the nose.



There are all sorts of sciences associated with Mudra Yoga but the most precise of all is Yantra Yoga, a sub study of Samkhya Yoga. These two studies represent the art of reducing all characteristics of one's inner and outer nature to a mathematical formula (Yantra).

Samkhya equates the entire Cosmos to mathematical formulae. Einstein explains his quantum theory with a very simple appearing $E=mc^2$... Mathematically it is a very brief but other mathematicians of his peer group understand the complexity of it.

There are other numerous studies in Mudra Yoga, such as Astrology, Phrenology, and the famous mudric hand postures. Depending upon your Guru's choice in this matter, he will direct you accordingly.

Mudras and prana

Mudras manipulate prana in much the same way that energy in the form of light or sound waves is diverted by a mirror or a cliff face. The nadis and charkas constantly radiate prana, which normally escapes from the body and dissipates into the external world. By creating barriers within the body through the practice of mudra, the energy is redirected within. For example, by closing the eyes with the

fingers in shankukhi mudra, the prana being radiated through the eyes is reflected back. In the same way, the sexual energy emitted through vajra nadi is redirected to the brain through the practice of vajroli mudra. Mudras are important techniques for awakening of Kundalini.

Chapter Nine—Why Meditate by... Swami Paramahansa Sri Nithyananda

Man is born out of Divine Energy. Man is made up of 5 major elements, namely Earth (Prithvi), Water (Jala), Fire (Agni), Air (Vayu), Ether (Akasha). Man emerged from these 5 elements, lives in these elements and will go back to them – the original source.

Existence or Cosmos or Prapancha is made up of these 5 elements. All the 5 elements are different forms of the same Energy called God or Self or Atman. Muslims call it Allah, Hindus call it Brahman, Christians call it God and so on.

As Thythreya Upanishad says “...from Existence came Ether, from ether came Air, from air came Fire, from fire came Water, from water came the Earth and from the Earth came Life....”

When Man is at ease or is in tune with these 5 elements, he is all right. When he is not at ease with them, he is dis-eased. All the meditation techniques that Masters have designed over the years are aimed at tuning man to these 5 elements.

The basis of all religions lies in tuning Man to Existence through these 5 elements. The thirst to get in tune with the source of the all-pervading Energy has given rise to many religions. Idols are made up of clay (Earth). Idol worship is trying to realize the Cosmic Energy through the Earth element. Idol worship is the first plane of tuning. Bathing in holy rivers is trying to realize the Energy through the water element; 80% of our body constitutes water. Performing Yagnya or Homa (rituals with fire) is trying to realize this Energy through the Fire element. The fire outside represents the fire inside us. Chanting or repeating mantras is trying to connect to this Energy through the Air element and finally Meditation or Dhyana is trying to connect to this Energy through the Ether element. Ether is the subtlest form of Energy. Man should attempt to graduate from Idol worship to Meditation.

Inspired by these ideas on meditation, may you merge with Existence and attain Nithyananda (Eternal Bliss). Let you all become awakened and become Buddhas. My love and blessings to you. A simple and effective meditation technique is the Mahamantra meditation which you may practice everyday to tune yourself with Existence.

The Mahamantra Meditation Technique

Mahamantra makes your mind sthira. Sthira means firm or rooted. The mind is all the time oscillating with thoughts. This meditation makes your mind still by making it enter into the zone of nomind. It is like a jumping board to enter into Infinity, to merge with Existence or God. It is an ancient Tibetan – Buddhist technique.

This meditation should be done on an empty stomach, either alone or as a group. Total duration is 30 minutes. You may use the audiocassette to aid you in the meditation.

First part:

Sit cross-legged in a comfortable position on the floor. Your head, neck and spine should be in a straight line. Those of you who are not able to sit on the floor may sit on a chair. Feel relaxed and close your eyes. Even after we close our eyes, we see forms and images from behind the eyelids. To counter this, imagine that your eyeballs have become as hard as stones, then the images will die. Keep your lips together and produce the sound ‘Mmmm...’ from inside. If you were to put your face inside an empty aluminum vessel and make a humming sound, the sound generated will be similar to this. Note that this is not ‘Humm...’ or ‘Omm...’, it is simply keeping your lips together and producing ‘Mmmm...’ sound. The humming should be as lengthy as possible between breathes; it should be as deep as possible (from the navel center) and as loud as possible. There is no need to make an effort to take in deep breaths, the body itself will take breaths when needed. Don’t become tense, just do it in a relaxed manner. Immerse your whole being and energy into creating this vibration. Try to minimize the gap between the humming sounds. After some time, you will feel that the humming continues without your effort and that you have become simply a listener! At the end of 20 minutes, stop the

humming (if you are playing the cassette, you will hear ‘Stop!’, and you stop as you are, abruptly).

Second part:

After stopping the humming, remain silent and inactive for 10 minutes in a blissful mood with a smiling face. (The cassette will play music for these 10 minutes). During this time, the Energy created by the 20 minutes of humming will enter all the corners of your being and cleanse it. If any thought comes to your mind let it come. Simply watch your mind and don’t resist any thought. My love and blessings to you.

The Dukkaharana Meditation Technique

During the age of Pathanjali, man was able to calm his mind by meditating with mantras. At that time, man was simple with no complex cerebral layers, hence these techniques worked. Today, methods adopting silence will not help. Man has become neurotic and complicated with the growth of Science and Consumerism. What exactly are these cerebral layers? They are the complications in the mind created by media that include - the television, the radio, the newspapers and the billboards. Consumerist ideas are continuously being injected into your Being. You are hypnotized and mesmerized. You need to unload these suppressions and desires in order to be able to sit calmly. This meditation technique does not force sanity into you but forces out the insanity in you. You are already Nithyananda (Eternal Bliss). That is your natural state. I just need to cut the layer of Dukkha (sorrow) that’s all. Dukkaharana is a technique that will enable the flowering of bliss within you by throwing out these cerebral layers. It works on cleansing the Muladhara chakra. Many Masters have employed this technique before. It takes totally 30 minutes.

Breathing is the bridge to the Universe. It is the system with which you are living your mind. If your thinking is calm, your breath will be relaxed. If your thinking is aggressive, your breathing will also be aggressive. You first need to control your breathing in order to control your mind. Presently, in our repressed state, most of us are half-alive and half-dead.

Let us go on to the meditation technique. You may practice this technique on an empty stomach preferably in the morning. Wear loose fitting (preferably white coloured) clothes and keep to the music in the audiocassette.

First part:

In the first part of this meditation, with your eyes closed, chaotic breathing should be carried out in order to create chaos in your repressed system. In a standing position, breathe in and when you breathe out, bend your knees a little and come back to the standing position while breathing in again; a pumping action will be created. The breathing should be aggressive. Your mental system will be made fully alive by the increased intake of oxygen; it becomes more vital. Your cells will get more energy and will create more bioelectricity or bio-energy. This energy will melt all the repressed emotions like melting ice. If you are playing the cassette, you will hear 'Stop!' at the end of 10 minutes.

Second part:

The next part is catharsis - expelling all the poison in you. With your eyes closed, for 10 minutes, stretch out and clench every part of your body as much as you can. At the end of these 10 minutes, you will feel vacant inside and you will become cool, calm and composed. If you are playing the cassette, when you hear me saying 'Stop', just stop as you are. For a moment, you will experience the state of 'No Mind'.

Third part:

For the next 10 minutes, sit or lie down in silence. Simply witness whatever happens inside or outside your Being. The first two parts of this technique are actually a preparation for this third part that is meditation. You will see that the mind becomes silent effortlessly by itself. Silence cannot be forced upon anyone, it can only happen. Remain in this relaxed state with a smiling face and blissful mood. During this time, there may be many experiences, just watch them as you would watch the television; watch your mind, thought by thought. 21 days of Dukkaharana will transform your Being.

This is like having a psychological bath. You will be able to experience the Silence in you. When you kill sorrow, bliss flowers and sends forth beautiful vibrations from you.

My love and blessings to you.

The Vipasana Meditation Technique

This is a very easy meditation technique and is called Vipasana. It does not require you to believe in any God or Guru. It can be done at any time of the day. It acts directly act on your mind and makes it more sensitive. It brings our minds under our complete awareness so that we can use it at any time to its fullest capacity.

This technique in a nutshell is - ‘watching your breath’. Our breath and mind are closely related. Scientists say that we use only 2 percent of our mind power. In order to use it fully, we need to meditate. Our mind power is wasted when we harbor thousands of thoughts in it. This Vipasana technique steadies our minds.

If you watch the elephant when it is walking, you will see that it sways its trunk from one side to the other continuously. If you give it a log of wood to hold, it will stop swaying its trunk while walking. Likewise, to steady our mind that is swaying all the time, we need something.

That is the Vipasana technique. When our mind stops swaying, it becomes more powerful. When hundred thoughts rise in our mind, only 2 of them materialize because our mind is exhausted in creating and harbouring these 100 thoughts. If only 10 thoughts rise in our mind, at least 8 of them will materialize because the energy that was earlier used in creating the remaining 90 thoughts can now be used to materialize these 8 thoughts. We will be able to use the energy to scrutinize these 8 thoughts and implement them.

Our breath is entwined with our mind. The elephant’s tusk that is seen outside as big and long is present inside the elephant’s mouth as teeth. It is actually the same bone. The tusk outside is nothing but the teeth inside and the teeth inside is nothing but the tusk outside.

Similarly, our breath when it goes inside, is our mind and the mind when it comes outside, is our breath. If you get angry, you will see that your breath is more aggressive. If you control your breath, you will see that your mind calms down. As you calm your mind, your breath will regularize and as your breath regularizes, your mind will calm down. Bringing this cycle under our complete awareness is what this technique does.

Now for the technique:

Sit in arthapadmasana posture. This is an easy Buddha-posture where you simply squat on the floor keeping your back straight. Balance your body. Let us see how to balance your body. Close your eyes and slowly move your upper body forwards, you will feel the weight of you body. Now, slowly push your body backwards until you reach a point where your centre of gravity falls in a straight line and you feel weightless. Now from this position, move further backwards and you again feel the weight of your body. Now move forwards until you reach the same point of weightlessness again. This position is your position for meditation. Each one has his own position for meditation and he has to identify it by this simple method.

When we breathe, four things happen and they are as follows: The air goes in, it returns to come out, it comes out and returns to go in. All you have to do is, keep your eyes closed and watch these four activities closely without missing any of them. Watch like how you watch television; watch like a witness these four stages of your breath. When you do this, don't suppress or resist any thought that surfaces, just look at them with friendship. This technique was founded by Buddha and is said to have created most number of enlightened people.

Practice this technique for 20 minutes everyday. It will bring in increasing clarity into your life. Your mind and body will come under your complete awareness. Currently, your mind and body are on their own. You are going behind them. When you get into a car and start the vehicle, you should be able to stop it when you wish to, only then you are in control of the car, else the car is controlling you! It is the same case with our minds also. We have started our minds but we are not able to stop it. Our minds are driving us now. Anything done with

awareness will bring about a big change in our lives. This technique increases our awareness of our mind and body.

My love and blessings to you.

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Biography

Mark D. Maxey, D.D., D. RH.

Mark strives for uniqueness in each line he pens. Through his writing, he deals with sensitive issues with directness and understanding. From light hearted to serious, his writing leads readers on a journey through an artist's mind. Along with his artistry, he is a brilliant organizer and dedicated friend. His words will take you into a strong heart and a deliberate mind. -stated by John W. Reagor, Jr.

Mark is an artist utilizing his talents through poetry, graphic arts, and photography. He has been published numerous times and has received various awards for his art. He spends his time in Oklahoma City working with others to improve and grow the artists community within Oklahoma. He serves on several art boards and volunteers his time teaching meditation and producing artists' workshops.

Mark also is in Holy Orders with the Eastern Orthodox Church, and helped start St. Raphael, the Archangel, Holy Catholic Church and Monastery, in Oklahoma City. He is also in a novitiate program with the White Robed Monks of St. Benedict. This order has direct ties to St. Benedict as well as with the Rinzai Zen traditions of Mahayana Buddhism.

Mark has helped form a non-profit organization in Oklahoma, Dharma Seeds Foundation. Dharma Seeds Foundation produces and publishes a newspaper regarding Chan Buddhist Meditation and Centering Prayer for persons incarcerated or in jails. The newspaper consists of educational and spiritual growth articles to aide in the positive change for inmates to facilitate their positive re-entry into society. The name of the newspaper is called "Dharma Seeds." All funds, whether income or principal, and whether acquired by gift or contribution or otherwise, is devoted to said purposes. All contributions (100%) go towards the publishing and mailing of the newsletter to those in jails and prisons. There is no paid staff just loving volunteers that offer their loving service to help those behind bars.

www.dharmaseeds.st-raphael-monastery.org

Resources for Prisoners

Free Books for Prisoners

Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery 16201 Tomki Rd., Redwood Valley, CA 95470

Americana Buddhist Temple 10515 North Latson Road, Howell, MI 48855

American Buddhist Association 10515 North Latson Road, Howell, MI 48843

Association for Research & Enlightenment 67th Street and Atlantic Ave., POB 595, Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Barre Center for Buddhist Studies 149 Lockwood Road, Barre, MA 01005

Buddhist Peace Fellowship Prison Project POB 3470, Berkeley, CA 94703

Chuang Yen Monastery, Program Director for English Program 2020 Route 301, Carmel, NY 10512

Dallas Buddhist Association 515 Apollo Road, Richardson, TX 75081

Dharma Publishing 2910 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, CA 94702

Freeing the Mindfulness, C/O Saraha Buddhist Center POB 12037, San Francisco, CA 94112

Healing Tao Prison Program POB 471, Revere, MA 02151

Human Kindness Foundation POB 61619, Durham, NC 27715

Larson Publications Dept. K, 4936 Route 414, Burdett, NY 14818

Liberation Prison Project POB 31527, San Francisco, CA 94131

Lionheart Foundation POB 194 Back Bay, Boston, MA 02117

Naljor Prison Dharma Service POB 1177, Mount Shasta, CA 96067

Prison Dharma Network POB 4623, Boulder, CO 80302

Ram Dass Tape Library Foundation 524 San Anselmo Ave., #203,
San Anselmo, CA 94960

Snow Lion Publications POB 6483, Ithaca, NY 14851

Sutra Translation Committee 2611 Davidson Avenue, Bronx, NY
10468

Siddha Yoga Prison Project POB 99140, Emeryville, CA 94662

Theosophical Book Gift Institute POB 270, Wheaton, IL 60189

Victoru Banner Publishing POB 53461, Washington, DC 20009 ;
book offered is “With You on The Path.”

Wisdom Publications 199 Elm Street, Somerville, MA 02144

Woodland Publications 2000 Arapaho Street, Woodland Park, CO
80863

Free or Low Cost Buddhist Publications & Newsletters

Prison Dharma POB 4623, Boulder, CO 80306

Dharma Foundation POB 9999, Berkeley, CA 94709

Dharma Friends POB 7708, Little Rock, AR 72217-7708

Dharma Seeds POB 61175 ,Oklahoma City, OK 73146-1175

Gassho, Atlanta Soto Zen Center 1404 McClendon Ave., Atlanta, GA 30307

Gateway Journal Box 700, Ramsey, NJ 07446-0700

Gay Buddhist Fellowship 2215 R. Market Street, PMB 456, San Francisco, CA 94114

Healing Tao Prison Program POB 471, Revere, MA 02151

Insight Meditation Society 1230 Pleasant Street, Barre, MA 01005

Purple Lotus Seed 636 San Mateo Ave., San Bruno, CA 94066
(specify English or Chinese)

Shenpen Osel 4322 Burke Ave A., Seattle, WA 98103

Turning Wheel POB 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704-0650

Newsletters that focus on prisoners rights and criminal justice issues

The Beat Within 275 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103

California Prison Focus 2940 16th Street #307, San Francisco, CA 94103

Coalition for Prisoners Rights POB 1911, Santa Fe, NM 87504

Families Against Mandatory Minimums 1612 K Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20006

National Lawyers Guild Prison Law Project 143 Madison Ave. 4FI, New York, NY 10016

North Coast Xpress POB 1226, Occidental, CA 95465

The Prison and Jail Project POB 6749, Americus, GA 31709

Prison Legal News 2400 NW 80th Street, #148, Seattle, WA 98117

Southland Prison Newsletter PMB-339, 955 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, MA 02139

Free Buddhist Sutras

Dharma Seeds POB 61175 ,Oklahoma City, OK 73146-1175

Spiritual Resources/Christian

Bede Griffiths Trust c/o Osage Forest of Peace, 141 Monastery Road, Sand Springs, OK 74063

Christian Bible College and Seminary, 10106 East Truman Road, Independence MO 64052-2158

Emmaus Correspondence School, 2570 Asbury Road, Dubuque IA 52001

Lamp and Light Publishers, Inc., 26 Road 5577, Farmington NM 87401

Loved Ones of Prisoners (LOOPS), PO Box 14953, Odessa TX 79768

The Missing Link, PO Box 40031, Cleveland OH 44140-0031

Prisoners for Christ Outreach Ministries, PO Box 1530 Woodinville WA 98072-1530

Prison Mission Association / Bible Correspondence Fellowship, PO Box 2300, Port Orchard WA 98366

Fellowship of St. Silas, PO Box 822169, Vicksburg, MS 39182-2169 (Eastern Orthodox)

United Brethren Jail and Prison Outreach Ministry, Kirk and Crissy Killingsworth, 1278 Glenneyre Box 219, Laguna Beach CA 92651

Spiritual Resources/Hindu & Yoga

The American Gita Society, 511 Lowell Place, Fremont CA 94536

Association of Happiness for all Mankind (AHAM), 4368 NC Hwy 134, Asheboro NC 27203

The Gangaji Foundation Prison Project, 505A San Marin Drive Suite 120, Novato CA 94945

ISKCON Prison Ministry, 1400 Cherry St, Denver CO 80220

NITHYANANDA VEDIC TEMPLE, 9720 Central Ave., Montclair, CA 91763

Osho Viha Meditation Center, PO Box 352, Mill Valley CA 94942

Sai Baba Bookstore, 305 West First St, Tustin CA 92780

Siddha Yoga Meditation Prison Project / SYDA Foundation, Prison Project, PO Box 99140, Emeryville CA 94662

Sivananda Yoga Prison Project, Prisoner Outreach, PO Box 195, Budd Road, Woodbourne NY 12788

Yoga on the Inside Foundation, 1256 Westwood Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90024

Further Resources for Psychological / Spiritual Transformation (Ageless Wisdom / Interfaith / Metaphysical / Native American / Psychology)

Anthroposophical Prison Outreach Project, 1923 Geddes Ave, Ann Arbor MI 48104-1797

The Art of Living / Prison SMART Program, PO Box 3642, Boulder CO 80307

Association for Research and Enlightenment, 215 67th St, Virginia Beach VA 23451

Contemplative Outreach, PO Box 737, Butler NJ 07405

The Conversations With God Foundation / Prison Outreach, MB#1150, 1257 Siskiyou Blvd, Ashland OR 97520

Friends of Peace Pilgrim, 7350 Dorado Canyon Road, Somerset CA 95684

The Heart Mountain Project, c/o Doug Booth, 1223 South St. Francis Drive Suite C, Santa Fe NM 87505

Larson Publications, Dept K, 4936 Route 414, Burdett NY 14818

Mettanokit, 187 Merriam Hill Road, Greenville NH 03048

Miracles Prisoner Ministry (A Course In Miracles), 501 East Adams St, Wisconsin Dells WI 53965

Native American Pride Committee, 3256 Knight Court, Bay City MI 48706

Rosicrucian Fellowship, 2222 Mission Ave, Oceanside CA 92054-2399

The Rosicrucian Fraternity, PO Box 220, Quakertown PA 18951

Science of Mind Foundation, 2600 West Magnolia Blvd, Burbank CA 91505

Surviving The System, Traci Lister, PO Box 1860, Ridgeland MS 39158

White Mountain Education Association, 543 Eastwood Drive, Prescott AZ 863030

Legal Support

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) / Prisoner's Assistance Directory, National Prison Project Publications, 915 15th St NW 7th Floor, Washington DC 20005

Centurion Ministries, Inc., 221 Witherspoon St, Princeton NJ 08542-3215

Davrie Communications 13215-C8 SE Mill Plain #144, Vancouver, WA 98684

EDPUBS, PO Box 1398, Jessup MD 20794-1398

Families Against Mandatory Minimums, 1612 K St N.W. Suite 700, Washington DC 20006

Grassroots Investigation Project (GRIP), Quixote Center, PO Box 5206, Hyattsville MD 20722

Innocence Project, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, 55 5th Ave 11th Floor, New York, NY 10003

Lewisburg Prison Project, PO Box 128, Lewisburg PA 17837

National Lawyers Guild, 132 Nassau St. Room #922, New York NY 10038

The National Death Row Assistance Network of CURE (NDRAN), Claudia Whitman, 6 Tolman Road, Peaks Island ME 04108

Prison Legal News, 2400 N.W. 80th St #148, Seattle WA 98117-4449